

USING TASK BASED WRITING INSTRUCTION TO PROVIDE
DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

by

Alexandros Merkouris Bantis

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EPIGRAPH

Written speech is monologous; it is a conversation with a blank sheet of paper. Thus writing requires a double abstraction: abstraction from the sound of speech and abstraction from the interlocutor ... our studies show that the child has little motivation to learn writing when we begin to teach it. He feels no need for it and has only a vague idea of its usefulness.

--Lev Vygotsky, *Thought & Language*, 1986, p.181

DEDICATION

What I remember most about Christine were her large brown eyes that seemed to sprout out of her rosy round face. She was in the second grade and had started learning English just a few years before. One day her teacher came to me for help because she was throwing chairs in the classroom. I sat down in a chair too small beside that little girl and gave her all my attention.

“Why?”

“Writing is hard.”

“Tell me, who reads what you write?”

“Nobody.”

This thesis is dedicated to the minority language children who throw chairs in the classroom because nobody has taught them how to have a conversation with a blank piece of paper.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ELLS:	English Language Learners
ERIC:	Education Resources Information Center
FFI:	Form Focused Instruction
IWT:	Independent Work Time
LAUSD:	Los Angeles Unified School District
NNS:	Non-native Speaker
NS:	Native Speaker
OCR:	Open Court Reading
TBI:	Task Based Instruction
TBwI:	Task Based Writing Instruction
TESOL:	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
ZPD:	Zone of Proximal Development

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of task based writing instruction (TBWI) on English language acquisition and differentiated instruction for minority language students during the Independent Work Time instructional component of the Open Court Reading program. One teacher and 10 third grade students (8-9 years old) participated in this mixed methods study. TBWI was as a platform for communicative language teaching. Together they recast the students' written interlanguage embedded into standard English. The study took place after school, 45 minutes per day for one month, resulting in 35 transcribed writing conferences, writing samples, and interviews. Results indicate that TBWI can be a useful vehicle for differentiated instruction, constructivist pedagogy, and principles of second language acquisition to address the diverse needs of second language learners.

CHAPTER 1, INTRODUCTION

Background

Many years ago I chose to enter the teaching profession because I wished to be a catalyst for learning and knowledge in the lives of the children I was going to come into contact with. I felt impelled to enter into a masters program in part from my experience as a first year teacher. Those third grade children were learning English as a second language and over half of them would eventually fail to join the literacy club. They began the prior year in a bilingual education class, but when they returned to class after Christmas break, the Spanish books were gone and replaced with English-only instruction. Angie, one of those students, began that year with strength and self-confidence, but one day she cried. She was forgetting how to write in her mother tongue; she was also struggling to learn English as a second language. Guided by these memories, I felt a sense of urgency during my masters program. What could I have done differently to steer her clear of failure?

Angie is not alone. There are about 1.5 million minority language students in California's public schools, and many of them struggle to successfully complete high school. High school is the end of the road for the educational aspirations of many minority language learner students of California, a road that often begins when they enter into a kindergarten class. Kindergarten children such as Angie speak little to no English. They are confronted with a teacher using a curriculum designed for native English speaking children, a curriculum that emphasizes direct instruction and behaviorist pedagogy.

The literature of constructivist pedagogy contains a wealth of information that could benefit Angie and her fellow minority language classmates. Teachers could harness the potential of constructivist concepts such as *zone of proximal development* (ZPD) and *assimilation* to more effectively guide minority language students towards English language proficiency.

The literature of second language acquisition also contains a wealth of information that could benefit Angie and her fellow minority language classmates. A branch of communicative language teaching called *task based instruction* (TBI) as well as *form focused instruction* (FFI) holds much promise. One variant of TBI/FFI is called a *jigsaw task* (a two-way information-gap task), which ideally pairs a native English speaker and an English language learner with an authentic communicative task and problem to be solved. Using English as an authentic tool for communication along with efficient techniques such as prompts and recasts, the native English speaker could be a rich source of input and provide highly differentiated instruction. Prompts can be an effective vehicle for injecting constructivist pedagogy into the classroom.

Problem Statement

For many of the 1.5 million minority language students currently enrolled in California's public education system, there exists a mismatch between their second language acquisition needs and the type of instruction they receive. Many receive English only instruction using materials designed for native English speakers. Many receive instruction using a pedagogy that is behaviorist in origin. Many learn in

classrooms that lack sufficient differentiation of instruction. Due in part to a failure to achieve cognitive English language proficiency, many of these minority language learners ultimately drop out of school.

The second language acquisition process is lengthy and complex often fraught with failure even under ideal learning conditions. Because of lack of differentiation and constructivist pedagogy, because of the absence of principles and practices from the field of second language acquisition, the learning conditions for these minority language learners are less than ideal.

Task Based Writing Instruction

One variant of the *jigsaw task* (a two-way information-gap task within task based instruction) developed in conjunction with this study is *task based writing instruction* (TBwI), which uses the writing conference as a vehicle for second language acquisition.

Maintaining primacy of meaning, TBwI uses the writing conference as a platform for authentic language use between the minority language student and the teacher. The two work together to recast the student's *interlanguage* (student emergent abilities in the second language) embedded within a rough draft into standard English. This could allow for highly differentiated language instruction.

The first step (pre-conference) requires the language learner to create a written rough draft. The written piece needs to serve an authentic communicative intent, such as making a response to literature or text-self connection. In the present study, the language learners were prompted to write a single paragraph text-self

connection after reading an literature excerpt. They were given a choice of three possible topic sentences; then they were prompted to write a rough draft paragraph by choosing one of them and writing four supporting sentences to create a five sentence paragraph.

The second step is a writing conference; the language learner (student) and native-speaker (teacher) sit down together to discuss the rough draft. They discuss it one sentence at a time. The teacher uses conversational techniques (prompts and recasts) so that they may rewrite it into standard English. The language learner has experiential expertise while the teacher has linguistic expertise. There is a focus on meaning with an occasional shift to grammar. At the conclusion of the writing conference, the student leaves with both the original rough draft and the final draft.

The third step (post-conference) occurs when the student compares the final draft and rough draft so as to notice the changes made. This may consist in marking up the rough draft with editing marks to reflect the changes. Finally, the student writes the final draft in his/her own hand.

Research Questions

There were three research questions of the current study:

- (1) What are the issues associated with using TBwI as a platform for communicative language teaching consistent with principles of TBI/FFI and constructivist pedagogy?
- (2) How does TBwI impact the degree of differentiated instruction within a mixed ability classroom?

(3) How does TBwI impact second language acquisition?

The overall goal of this study was to explore the use of TBwI for third grade English language learners receiving instruction with Open Court Reading (OCR), an English language arts program designed for native English speakers.

Significance of the Study

Developing a new tool (TBwI) to provide differentiated instruction, constructivist pedagogy, and second language acquisition pedagogy has importance from a theoretical perspective. It represents a new and potentially fruitful line of investigation in communicative language teaching, and it also has practical importance.

There exists a mismatch between the linguistic needs of many minority language students and their English language arts curriculum. Some students may respond positively to communicative language teaching approaches rather than reading programs designed for native English speakers.

Within OCR, *independent work time* (IWT) is an instructional block of 20-40 minutes per day during which time students work in small groups or independently on projects; meanwhile, the teacher pulls aside a flexible group of students or works with them individually to provide differentiated instruction. It is during this time that the teacher often will work with small groups of students on their writing, either preteaching or reteaching OCR lessons.

This study pilots the application of TBwI within IWT of OCR to understand the impact of diversifying the instructional approaches for those students.

Organization

This thesis contains five chapters.

Chapter two first examines the historical context and current state of public education for English language learners in California. This section also examines the research base both favorable to and critical of behaviorist pedagogy and OCR. Next, this section examines the literature on select topics of second language acquisition and constructivist pedagogy that may support English language learning. Specifically, the section examines task based instruction, form focused instruction, zone of proximal development, and the distinction within constructivist pedagogy between accommodation and assimilation. Finally, it provides a description and rationale for task-based writing instruction.

Chapter three describes the methodology used in the study. It establishes the research questions and the process used to answer them. Background information regarding characteristics of the school site, participants, and myself as participant-researcher are provided. Various aspects of OCR that deal with writing instruction and IWT are examined. Finally, the procedure for data collection (how the study was conducted) and analysis (how the information was coded) are discussed.

Chapter four presents both quantitative and qualitative results of the study. After the introduction, the primary data set is introduced, which was a synthesis of the student rough drafts and transcriptions of the 35 writing conferences, broken down to the conversational turn level, each turn coded according to targeted linguistic feature and conversational technique (e.g., prompt, recast) used. Next,

information from quantitative data sources is presented and discussed. Finally, information from qualitative data sources (the primary data set plus interviews) are presented and organized according to the research questions and topics associated with the research questions.

Chapter five discusses the results presented in the previous chapter, organized around the three research questions. I have provided specific recommendations for teacher practitioners who are interested in incorporating TBwI into their classroom. I have also examined the broad policy implications of the study. Before concluding the chapter with final thoughts, I have provided recommendations for additional research needed.

The appendices provide a wealth of additional information. Appendix A presents summary data for each individual student. Appendix B presents sample writing prompts used for the study. Appendix C presents the detail for one sample writing conference along with the student draft. Appendix D lists the recruitment tools used. Finally, Appendix E recounts the iterative process used to arrive at the final coding system.

Definitions

The following are select definitions that may provide clarification regarding technical terms and concepts. Please consult the Glossary for additional terms

Behaviorist Pedagogy: A teaching method that emphasizes the ability to learn new information through repetition and structured practice.

Constructivist Pedagogy: A teaching method that emphasizes the need for a learner to actively participate in the learning process by incorporating new information into previously internalized knowledge (De Lisi & Golbeck, 1999).

Direct Instruction Pedagogy: A teaching method that emphasizes fast-paced and explicit instruction that may be highly scripted O'Neill (1988).

Differentiated Instruction: Instruction that varies according to the instructional needs of students in a multi-level or multi-ability classroom.

English Language Learner: A student who is learning English as a second language.

Focus on Form: Long & Robinson (1998) describes this as a type of language instruction that is holistic, focused on meaning, with some grammar instruction within the context of a focus on meaning.

Focused Task: Ellis (2003) describes it as type of second language instruction that is designed by the teacher to create opportunities for instruction to focus on a specific grammar topic.

Form Focused Instruction (FFI): An implicit form of grammar instruction, within the umbrella of communicative language teaching that is associated with task based instruction and may incorporate focused tasks (Skehan, 1998).

Independent Work Time: Bereiter et al. (2000) describes it as a 20-40 minute period of instruction within OCR when most of the students are engaged in independent activities, giving the teacher the opportunity to provide differentiated

instruction by working one-on-one or with flexible small groups of students to pre-teach or re-teach OCR lessons.

Information-Gap Task: Ellis (2003) describes it as a type of task based instruction with two participants, one who holds the information and the other who does not. To complete the task this information must be exchanged.

Jigsaw Task: Ellis (2003) describes it as a type of two-way information-gap task (task based instruction). The two participants each hold information needed to complete the task, and a back and forth flow of that information is needed to complete the task.

Minority Language Student: within the United States, one who is learning English as a second language; this term is similar to *English language learner* except that it emphasizes that the student's primary language is not that of the dominant culture.

Task Based Instruction (TBI): A communicative language teaching approach whereby language learners must work together and use the second language to solve an authentic communicative problem (Ellis, 2003).

Zone of Proximal Development: Represents skills and concepts maturing within a learner, which may be used to solve problems under conditions of assisted performance; Vygotsky (1986) posited that two students may have the same level of independent performance yet have very different instructional needs because one may have a larger zone of proximal development.

Limitations

Second language acquisition is a complex process that typically spans many years, but the study took place over a period of only one month; therefore it was difficult to extrapolate second language acquisition from such a short time frame. Furthermore, while the purpose was to simulate the use of TBwI within the regular school day by the regular teacher, I was unable to obtain permission from the school principal. Since I was not the students' regular teacher, it took place outside of the instructional day. Therefore, I had limited ability to integrate the intervention into the regular instructional program.

CHAPTER 2, LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

About two years ago I had the opportunity to enroll in a masters of education program. I had been teaching for about six years and felt there to be a disconnect between the language arts curriculum (designed for native English speakers) and the needs of my English language learners (the term *English language learner* and *minority language student* will be used interchangeably in this paper). I had many questions as I began my course of study. The most important one formed the nucleus of this thesis: how can I translate what I learn into second language acquisition for my students?

The first part of this literature review examines the current condition of California's public education for minority language students (those whose mother tongue is not English) and seeks to identify areas of imbalance. As shall be elucidated below, it is not hollow political rhetoric to speak of California's educational crisis. For some it is experienced second-hand through television news bytes. For many teachers and the communities they serve, however, *education crisis* is a visceral reality.

The second part of this literature review looks at the knowledge base of constructivist pedagogy and second language acquisition to see if there are concepts and approaches that can be transplanted into California's elementary classrooms of minority language students.

California's Education Crisis

There is a growing consensus that the achievement gap between students of high and low socioeconomic status is indicative of an education crisis in California. Barton (2005) contended that the State's official high school graduation rate of 87 percent is really about 71 percent. Other researchers looking specifically at students in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) have found that only 20 percent of English language learner students will enter high school and successfully complete coursework that will qualify them for admission to the University of California system. The LAUSD's Hispanic students have a high school graduation rate of about 39 percent, one of the state's lowest (Losen & Wald, 2005). California is second to last among the states--above Mississippi--in terms of high school seniors who enroll in four-year colleges (Rogers, Terriquez, Valladares, & Oakes, 2006).

The mayor of Los Angeles has characterized the problem as "the new civil rights issue of our time" (Landsberg, 2006).

In 1996 State of California sought research-based solutions to address the growing concerns in public education (Moustafa & Land, 2001). Researchers presented data that OCR was effective in bringing students of low socioeconomic status to grade level (Foorman, Francis, Fletcher, Mehta, & Schatschneider, 1998). Ten years later, OCR had become the program of choice in California schools of low-socioeconomic status minority language students; with only two primary language arts programs to choose from (OCR or Houghton Mifflin Reading), about 85 percent of California school districts had chosen OCR (Manzo, 2004).

It has been called a civil rights issue because the dropout rate has disproportionately affected certain minorities. This problem is not restricted to the Hispanic students of the LAUSD but has affected minority language students across the state. This is a significant problem because about 24 percent of students in the public schools are learning English as a second language; about 1.5 million minority language students were enrolled in California public schools (out of a total enrollment of 6.3 million), with especially high concentrations in certain schools (Rumberger, Gándara, & Merino, 2006).

The success in achieving English language proficiency varies according to many factors. For example, the California Legislative Analyst's Office found that approximately 50 percent of students whose first language is Spanish redesignate as English proficient after 6.7 years of instruction versus 3.6 years for students whose first language is Mandarin (Warren, 2004). These results are also consistent Cummins' (1994) timeframe of 5-7 years to achieve cognitive academic language proficiency.

English language learners, especially inner-city Hispanic ones, have higher high school drop out rates yet those who rapidly acquire English language proficiency do not. Thus, one response to this problem has been to advocate change in education policy, especially at the elementary school level where students begin their journey toward English language proficiency.

Changes in Education Policy

The adoption and implementation of OCR has taken place against a backdrop of two radical shifts in teaching methods within California's elementary public schools (kindergarten through grades 5/6). The first has been the decline of bilingual education. As of January 1999, California's Proposition 227 severely limited public schools' ability to offer bilingual education programs. At the national level, the 2002 repeal of the Federal Bilingual Education Act reinforced Proposition 227's intent of all-English instruction (Crawford, 2004). Academia within second language acquisition was among the strongest proponents of bilingual education (Crawford, 2004; Krashen & Biber, 1988; Thomas & Collier, 2002; Cummins, 1994). With the rise to prominence of all-English instruction, the theoretical and research base of second language acquisition has largely disappeared from the discourse of K-12 public education in California. The primary exception to this has been *specially designed academic instruction in English*, but these strategies are designed to support content instruction, not English language acquisition (Genzok, 2003).

Later, I shall review the literature regarding OCR along with select topics from second language acquisition and constructivist pedagogy. However, it is important to bear in mind the broader historical context of changes in education policy. It has been these changes that have led to a mismatch between needs of the curriculum and those of minority language students.

The second radical shift has been characterized as *the reading wars*, a polarizing struggle between whole language and phonics-based approaches (Pearson,

2004). Whole language has been difficult to define, however it tends to emphasize a holistic approach based upon constructivist principles (Richards, Rodgers, & Swan, 2001). In contrast, a phonics-based approach posits that many students need explicit instruction in the sound-spelling system of English in order to attain literacy. Aside from phonics, there were four casualties in the wake of widespread use of whole language: skills instruction, strategy instruction, text structure instruction, and content area reading; in addition, there was very strong resistance to standardized accountability measures (Pearson, 2004).

As with bilingual education, the triumph of phonics over whole language took place first not in classrooms but in the halls of power. In 1996 the California Board of Education placed OCR on the state textbook adoption list over objections voiced by teachers on the Instructional Resources Evaluation Panel (Moustafa & Land, 2001). Injecting explicit instruction of phonics, skills instruction, strategy instruction, text structure instruction, content-area reading, and accountability measures into the curriculum may have been needed to restore a balance to literacy instruction. Unfortunately, with the triumph of a phonics-based approach (e.g., OCR) and *direct instruction* pedagogy (see below), there came a paradigm shift, "... and it was not clear whether there was a place for constructivist pedagogy in general or whole language in particular in these new conversations." (Pearson, 2004, p. 228).

The catalyst of this investigation was a feeling. The puzzle of literacy instruction in my classroom seemed to be missing a piece. I had been told at LAUSD-sponsored professional developments that whole language was bad and

explicit phonics instruction was good. Using OCR, I was told, would lead to faster decoding speed, which was equated with English literacy success. Indeed, using OCR my English language learners did receive grammar instruction, strategy instruction, explicit phonics, as well as exposure to a variety of genres and text structures. Yet those same English language learners said to me, “I don’t understand the story.” and “I don’t like writing because nobody reads it.” I took note of the fact that OCR was primarily designed for native English speakers. Later, a review of the literature led me to suspect the missing piece to be a holistic approach that would be meaning centered, based upon constructivist pedagogy and principles of second language acquisition.

The Research on Open Court Reading

The literature on OCR supports the notion that it is a balanced and research-based literacy program that emphasizes explicit instruction of phonics and phonemic awareness. However, it also points to what is missing piece of the literacy puzzle for English language learners: a holistic approach based upon constructivist pedagogy.

The first major study on OCR took place in Texas schools in the early 1990s. The researchers’ hypotheses was that explicit (as opposed to implicit) phonics instruction would result in greater phonemic awareness for primary students at risk for reading failure, and that this growth would influence academic growth: “The results of this research clearly indicate that early instructional intervention makes a difference for the development and outcomes of reading skills in the first- and second-grade children at risk for reading failure.” (Foorman et al. 1998, p. 51). The

goal of the study was to compare the effectiveness of three different approaches: direct code, which was explicit instruction of phonics and phonemic awareness; (2) implicit code, a literature-based curriculum with implicit phonics instruction; and (3) embedded code, an intermediate approach. The study gauged success of literacy instruction in terms of reading fluency, defined as the number of correct words (total words read minus errors) the student could sound out from a passage not previously encountered. The researchers found that students with low initial levels of phonemic awareness experienced minimal decoding growth with implicit phonics instruction in contrast to significant growth with explicit phonics instruction. Implicit phonics instruction is associated with the whole language approach.

There has been much debate regarding the reliability and validity of the study. It took place at three different school sites. The site using implicit code also had the highest percentage of students on a free lunch program (i.e., they had the lowest socioeconomic status). As noted above, a pre-publication version of this report was presented to the California State Assembly Education Committee and was a major force behind the adoption of OCR.

The National Reading Panel (2000) confirmed these findings. The report was a meta-analysis of the existing research. As such, it only included quantitative studies that had an experimental or quasi-experimental design (experimental group, control group, statistical significance, etc.). Qualitative research studies were excluded. The report had many recommendations. Primary among them was that explicit instruction

of phonics and phonemic awareness in the early grades were important elements of a balanced literacy program.

Maddahian (2002) used quantitative methods to examine the efficacy of OCR and found it to be effective in raising test scores for low-performing second grade students. The study compared OCR with Success for All, another commercial program that also has a strong emphasis on explicit instruction in phonics and phonemic awareness.

Izumi, Coburn, & Cox (2002) looked at model schools to see how their success could be replicated. They examined eight schools with high academic achievement and low socioeconomic status. The researchers observed classrooms and interviewed principals about what factors had contributed to their success. Direct instruction was found to be a key element to school improvement. “An important advantage of using a scripted curriculum such as Open Court is that all teachers adhere to a pacing schedule that requires that lessons are set according to a strict timetable. Thus, for instance, on a given day every second-grade teacher will be teaching the same lesson.” (Izumi et al., p. 13).

This study is significant in that it highlights one potential weakness of OCR: lack of differentiated instruction. Children who have differing levels of language development have differing needs. A fourth grade child recently arrived from Mexico City and at grade level has differing needs from a student who previously lived on a Mexican hacienda and arrives with no prior formal schooling experiences. Both of them have very different needs from an African-American child who arrives

to school speaking a non-standard English dialect and the second generation Hispanic child whose parents only speak Spanish.

Williams et al. (2005) surveyed principals and teachers at 257 schools, with normal distribution of low-, mid-, and high performing schools. One of their conclusions was the importance of a coherent standards-based instructional program. They noted a correlation between high performing schools and districts that played a strong role in curriculum development. “These principals report that the district has clear expectations for student performance aligned with the district’s adopted curriculum and that it evaluates the principal based on the extent to which instruction in the school aligns with the curriculum.” (Williams et al., p. 18). This is significant because it shows the pressure placed upon school administrators to emphasize uniformity rather than differentiation.

Direct Instruction

As noted above, one of the major policy recommendations of the National Reading Panel (2000) was the importance of *explicit* instruction in phonics and phonemic awareness for the early grades. Much of the literature on OCR is infused with direct instruction pedagogy. Sig Englemann, the famed direct instruction pioneer at the University of Oregon, characterized direct instruction as having a scripted and rapid-paced instruction (Izumi et al., 2002). Englemann authored SRA’s Reading Mastery, a highly scripted phonics based program which was later expanded into OCR. O’Neill (1988) reviewed the literature on teaching effectiveness and found direct instruction to be “... highly associated with increased gains among primary

children from working and middle class backgrounds is a common, almost universal conclusion of recent research. However, the effects appear to be more pronounced for low-ability pupils with an external locus of control.” (O'Neill, p. 173).

In a more recent study, Conner, Morrison, & Katch (2004) looked at the differential effects of implicit versus explicit instruction as well as teacher-centered versus child-centered instruction. They analyzed the effectiveness of these different types according to students' fall and spring decoding and vocabulary abilities. They concluded that students with low initial vocabulary and low decoding skills benefited from *teacher-managed explicit phonics instruction* (TME) followed by progressively more implicit instruction during the school year. Students with low initial decoding but high vocabulary benefited most from TME, child-managed implicit instruction, and lots of opportunities to do independent reading/writing activities. This study highlights the importance of flexibility within the classroom to respond to the diverse needs of the students. Clearly, some studies have established statistically significant advantages to direct instruction. At the same time, not all students respond equally well to the same methodology.

The research base critical of OCR is both quantitative and qualitative, having both academic and sociopolitical implications. Literature critical of OCR in terms of academics have focused on the complex nature of literacy as well as the need for a meaning-centered approach (Moustafa & Land, 2001; Peck & Serrano, 2002; Wilson, Martens, Arya, & Altwerger, 2004). In terms of a sociopolitical dimension, Achinstein & Ogawa (2006) as well as Achinstein, Ogawa, & Speigman (2004)

have identified the emergence of a two-tier educational system in California: (1) a constructivist and student-centered curriculum that stresses academic freedom, creativity, and high-level thinking skills for schools in higher socioeconomic areas; and (2) a direct instruction textbook-centered curriculum that stresses rigid uniformity of instruction, narrow measures of literacy, and lower-level thinking skills. Especially disturbing is the implication that children of low socioeconomic status (within California urban schools, often minority language students) have a fundamentally different learning style that requires a regimented and structured pedagogy emphasizing lower-level thinking skills.

Wilson et al. (2004) found that implicit phonics instruction embedded within meaning-centered instruction results provides superior results over explicit phonics instruction because students develop better reading comprehension. They studied 84 urban students of low socioeconomic status using three programs: (1) Direct Instruction, a predecessor to OCR; (2) OCR; and (3) Guided Reading, a literature-based program adapted from Irene Fountas and Gay Sue Pinnell. The students were tested using the phonics subtest of the Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery. They also conducted observations and teacher interviews. They found that the percentages of miscues at the Guided Reading site was lower because there was a greater concern for meaning. It should be noted, however, that no English language learners were included in the study.

Moustafa & Land (2001) found no significant advantage to using OCR with economically disadvantaged students. In contrast to previous studies, they looked at a

more comprehensive measure of literacy: second through fifth grade scores on the SAT/9 (a California achievement test for elementary students). From the LAUSD, 159 schools were selected and categorized according to percentage of students on the free lunch program and which English language arts program they were using (Non-OCR, OCR, and long-term OCR). For second grade students, they found no statistically significant difference between the three programs. However, when looking at all students (grades 2-5), both types of OCR schools were significantly more likely to be in the bottom quartile of SAT/9 academic achievement.

In the same study, they looked at teacher ability to differentiate instruction and respond to the individual needs of the learners. The OCR teacher's manual contains a plethora of activities and does not appear to be a scripted or rigid program.

However, in every district-wide adoption we are aware of in California, the state in which our study took place, teachers are required to complete every activity described in the teachers' manual with the entire class, whether it is appropriate or not, and to do it at a prescribed pace (i.e., so many lessons within so many days), whether it is appropriate or not. (Moustafa & Land, 2001, p. 8).

This is significant because the validity of the research supportive of OCR assumes a program that allows the teacher to respond and adapt to the needs of the students. Furthermore, one of the objections encountered in the literature is not to OCR per se, but to a rigid and inflexible implementation that does not allow for differentiation of instruction.

Peck & Serrano (2002) studied approximately 100 teachers in a university program and identified concerns regarding differentiating instruction for English

language learner students (ELLS). This qualitative study was based on their records working with both new and experienced teachers (some were in a teaching credential program and others were returning for their master degrees). They looked at lesson observations, field notes, and surveys. Much of their paper discussed broad themes that had been identified as concerns by the participants and through observations:

On the positive side, the network of support for ELLS can be strong and effective, depending on the teacher and coach. The curriculum definitely provides clear guidelines and rules. On the negative side, we heard numerous examples of children who did not understand the teacher's oral language or the stories they were asked to read. Rather than being asked to accommodate to the children's levels, teachers were asked to follow a script, treating all students the same. (Peck & Serrano, p. 6).

More recently, Achinstein & Ogawa (2006) highlighted the growing pressure teachers face when attempting to differentiate their instruction according to the needs of their students:

In our two case studies, district and school administrators enforced fidelity to improve the academic performance of students by requiring teachers to adhere to Open Court's pedagogical script, use only materials provided by the program, and cover the material at the prescribed pace. Fidelity left little or no room for teacher discretion and thus suppressed teachers' reflection and discussion. (Achinstein & Ogawa, p. 54).

Achinstein et al., (2004) contrasted teacher enculturation in two different school districts. They concluded that one school district, faced with limited resources and large numbers of minority language students, adopted a culture that discouraged higher-level thinking skills both for students and teachers. It was a behaviorist pedagogy that was sold as teacher-centered but was textbook-centered in actuality. The other school district, with abundant resources, embraced a constructivist

pedagogy, focused on student-centered instruction, and cultivated higher-level thinking skills at all levels, from the student right up to the superintendent.

For Schroeder (2006), "Our charge [as public school educators] is to fundamentally improve the interaction between the teacher and the student to create critical thinkers prepared to participate in a diverse and complex society." The next section examines a pedagogy that addresses this need for quality of interaction between teacher and student.

Constructivist Pedagogy

Vygotsky (1986) developed the concept of ZPD for teachers to assist the child in developing a mature schema of scientific concepts and logical thinking, which he refers to as a *fabric of concepts*.

The ZPD represents skills and concepts a student can successfully access under conditions of assisted performance. It is an important theoretical basis and rationale for differentiated instruction. Every classroom has students working at different ability levels, not only in terms of what they can do independently but also what they can do under conditions of assisted performance.

The concept of ZPD highlights the need for formative assessments that are forward looking (measures of assisted performance) rather than backward-looking (measures of skills/concepts previously mastered), as can be seen from Vygotsky's concern about the dubious nature of intelligence tests. Two students who might test at the same level on an assessment of previously mastered skills might have very different instructional needs.

Let us take a simple example. Suppose I investigate two children upon entrance into school, both of whom are ten years old chronologically and eight years old in terms of mental development ... These children seem to be capable of handling problems up to an eight-year-old's level, but not beyond that. Suppose that I show them various ways of dealing with the problem ... Under these circumstances it turns out that the first child can deal with problems up to a twelve-year-old's level, the second up to a nine-year-old's. Now, are these children mentally the same? (Vygotsky, 1978, pp. 85-86).

Of course, the teacher-practitioner would ask a slightly different question: are these children's instructional needs the same? As with teacher-practitioners, Vygotsky was concerned not only with the level of instruction but also the quality of interaction between the teacher and student. Imitation can have a negative connotation (cf. accommodation), but Vygotsky saw it as an effective vehicle for assisted performance provided that it correlated with the child's the ZPD:

But recently psychologists have shown that a person can imitate only that which is within her developmental level. For example, if a child is having difficulty with a problem in arithmetic and the teacher solves it on the blackboard, the child may grasp the solution in an instant. But if the teacher were to solve a problem in higher mathematics, the child would not be able to understand the solution no matter how many times she imitated it. (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 88).

Let us extrapolate this concept to the area of second language acquisition. Each language learner has uniquely different combinations of emergent grammatical structures and vocabulary. To push students to ever higher levels of independent performance, the teacher must choose a topic and method of interaction with the student. Each student may have a unique ZPD. Interaction below this zone would likely result in no new learning. Interaction above this zone would likely have the

result that the student neither learns nor understands, no matter how many times the teacher is imitated.

Again, Vygotsky would argue that ZPD should be used as a tool to orient teachers towards those functions of the student “currently in an embryonic state” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86) rather than ones already mastered. Teachers should have high expectations and focus on what students are in the process of learning rather than what they have already mastered. However, to go beyond the ZPD could result in mechanical imitation and absence of learning.

In some cases, the concept of ZPD has lost some of its force in classrooms as instruction becomes increasingly passive. One way of looking at this process is *commodification*, wherein schools begin to be structured within an assembly-line construct toward the production of a commodity: school knowledge. “Teachers and schools, often coerced by governments and education authorities, have, over many years, evolved a school curriculum based on the production of endless routine exemplar problems which facilitate short-term reproduction for assessment purposes.” (Beveridge, 1997, p. 29). Explicit and regimented whole-group phonics instruction may have a valid place in the school day, but Vygotsky would probably say that the most effective instruction stems from assisted performance that is differentiated to the minority language student’s given ZPD for second language acquisition. This would be instruction centered upon student needs rather than the dictates of a pacing plan and textbook designed for native English speakers.

According to Piaget's constructivist pedagogy, the student is presented with several alternatives when confronted with new information or ideas that are not consistent with what has already been internalized. This feeling of cognitive failure can be repressed or laughed off; alternatively, it can be acknowledged and a process of cognitive restructuring (assimilation) begins.

The pressure to perform in certain school situations, however, might well place a premium on students' accommodations to teachers' descriptions of correct procedures or answers. In many cases, these accommodations attain short-lived success and do not ensure a sufficient level of understanding to guarantee that the successful performance or correct answers will be replicated at subsequent points in time. (De Lisi & Golbeck, 1999, p. 9).

This reiterates the point made by Vygotsky that certain types of learning may result in short-term gains if a student is working above the level of meaningful assisted performance or there is pressure to simply repeat the correct answer. In contrast, interaction that is meaning-based and student-centered may create an opportunity to acknowledge the cognitive failure from a breakdown in communication between the second language learner and teacher.

To conclude, Vygotsky's ZPD presents us with an apprentice model of learning. Through various forms of assisted performance, the student's emerging ability may mature until it can become internalized. Crucial to this process would be two factors. First, the teacher would accurately evaluate the student's ZPD; although assessments that measure independent performance are certainly valuable, the best measure of ZPD will be actual real-time student performance under conditions of assisted performance (i.e., teacher observation and reflection). Second,

the teacher should have the discretion to act upon this information to deliver differentiated instruction that is truly targeted to the student's ZPD; at least some portion of the day should be guided neither by scripts nor curriculum pacing plans but instead by the true individualized needs of the student. Meanwhile, Piaget's constructivist model of learning suggests that meaningful long-term learning does not come from rote learning but from meaningful opportunities to experience a breakdown in communication, acknowledge the cognitive failure, and then begin the process of restructuring the emerging English competency.

The constructivist pedagogy of Piaget and Vygotsky examines the process of knowledge and concepts acquisition in general as well as the type of teacher-student interaction that result in student learning. It also serves as a foundation for the subsequent development of current second language acquisition theory and practice. The following section deals with second language acquisition and how teacher-student interaction can meet the needs of second language learners.

Second Language Acquisition

Much investigation has taken place to understand the differences and similarities of first and second language acquisition. Krashen (1982) made a distinction between language learning and acquisition, stating that traditional grammar-based approaches often lead to knowledge of the language as an object of formal study rather than communicative competence. In contrast, acquisition of the second language is a process similar to what children experience with their first language. The logical conclusion of such a premise is that since children do not

receive grammar lessons from their mothers/caretakers, neither should older language learners interested in acquiring a second language. A teacher using Krashen & Terrell's (2000) natural approach would provide lots of comprehensible input in a relaxed learning environment during the initial stages of language acquisition.

However, both Long (1996) and Swain (1985) were concerned that input alone would not lead to mastery of the language, especially in terms of expressive language and grammatical competence. Thus, continued a central debate within academia of second language acquisition: What role does grammar instruction have within the classroom? What is the relationship between receptive and expressive language development? None of these questions have been conclusively answered. In part, this is due to the high failure rate in adult second language learning when contrasted with almost universal success of first language acquisition (Bley-Vroman, 1988).

Task-Based Instruction

One proposed answer to the questions raised in the above paragraph is TBI that includes FFI. It represents a middle ground between naturalistic forms of communicative language teaching focused on comprehensible input and traditional language teaching focused almost exclusively on grammar. According to Ellis (2003), although the emphasis of TBI is on oral communicative competence, it can encompass all four domains of language (listening, speaking, reading, and writing); while grammar exercises (associated with traditional language teaching) prompt students to learn target language forms, and tasks guide students to actually use the

target language. Skehan (1998) noted that tasks emphasize primacy of meaning and present a communication problem that needs to be solved.

Probably the most fundamental mind-shift of TBI is the concept of linking classroom instruction with the real-world importance of language: communication.

Smith (1988) observed that:

Anything a child is not interested in doing should be modified or avoided. Forcing a child into boring or painful activity will merely teach the child that the activity is boring or painful, no matter how good we think it is for the child. Anything with a mark attached should be avoided. Children quickly learn that many school activities are worth doing only for the grade, and when they learn that, they learn that the activity is intrinsically worthless. (Smith, p. 15)

For Lightbown (1998), the segregation between language instruction and language use can become a self-fulfilling prophesy when language knowledge and actual use are segregated in a way that language learning does not lead to grammatical competence under conditions of actual communication.

Form-Focused Instruction

The concept of FFI evolved in conjunction with TBI as a method of developing grammatical competence within the context of a communicative language approach. FFI is not one single approach, but, instead, is a continuum of approaches ranging from explicit and planned to implicit and reactive. Long & Robinson (1998) defined FFI as an occasional shift of attention from meaning to grammar, similar to what happens in real life when there is some sort of breakdown in communication. For example, Lightbown (1998) refers to the concept of *negotiation of form* in terms

of a French immersion teacher who is very skilled in getting learners to correct their own oral grammar mistakes through incisive questions.

Krashen (1982) developed the *monitor hypothesis* to account that the awareness of the rules of a language could allow a person to correct mistakes yet not lead to fluent native-like production. Skehan (1998) built upon it by positing that the brain has a dual coding system: (1) a rule-based and an (2) exemplar-based system for storing language information. While the rule-based system is flexible and logical, it does not lead to fluent production. Fluency in speech comes from the exemplar-based system. Unlike Krashen, Skehan posited that when the language learner is pushed to produce output by means of his rule-based system, what s/he speaks in turn becomes input for the exemplar-based system. Thus, over time awareness of the rules of language can translate to fluent and grammatically correct language proficiency. This stands in contrast to Krashen's position that language learning does not lead to language acquisition.

In a similar vein, Long's (1996) *interaction hypothesis* developed the importance of selective attention, based to a large extent upon the noticing hypothesis of Schmidt (2001). The interaction hypothesis states that a second language learner does not attend to all features of the target language input, but in the context of a conversation between a native speaker and language learner, the feedback received can prompt the language learner to notice certain features that might otherwise have gone unnoticed. Thus, TBI/FFI represents teacher-planned interactions and discussions in class that lead to language learning; as a result, the

students are led to notice their grammatical errors that cause communication problems. It is this noticing that leads to awareness and subsequent language proficiency.

Multitudinous studies of TBI/FFI have examined whether prompts or recasts are more effective (Ammar & Spada, 2006; Doughty, 2001; Ellis, 2006b; Harley, 1998; Lyster, 2004). Recasts are generally defined as more subtle means of correction because the native speaker repeats what the language learner said, but without grammatical errors. In contrast, prompts use a variety of techniques to more explicitly draw attention to the error and prompt the language learner to restate and self-correct. Other studies have looked at the efficacy of TBI more generally (Mackey, 2006; Pica, 2005; Swan, 2005).

Harley (1998) examined the use of FFI with second grade language learners. She used high-interest tasks to raise consciousness in the correct use of a specific grammar form. She concluded that student attention was selective and limited. High-interest and meaningful activities tended to generate the best results. Furthermore, when students were given activities involving a large amount of new vocabulary, they tended to focus on grammatical forms much less.

Doughty & Varela (1998) examined the use of FFI with recasts in English as a second language science and math classes, grades 6-8. Within the context of students reporting on their results to the class, there were many opportunities for the teacher to use recasts to guide the students into correct usage of the past tense. The study indicated that recasts were effective in improving use of the past tense both in

writing and speaking. However, there was some question as to whether these results would result in long-term language gains.

Doughty (2001) conducted a meta-analysis of studies comparing prompts and recasts. She concluded that recasts tend to be used for a variety of purposes and forms in language immersion classrooms, and that this ambiguity weakens the effectiveness to target grammar usage. In contrast to abandoning recasts in favor of prompts, she recommended a reexamination of how recasts are used in the class since this type of subtle error correction can be a valuable element in guiding the student to improved language proficiency.

Lyster (2004) looked at the use of prompts and recasts with fifth grade language learners. He looked at FFI with prompts, with recasts, and with no feedback. His results indicated that FFI was more effective when combined with prompts in learning the targeted grammar form (noun gender).

Ammar & Spada (2006) tested the use of prompts and recasts with sixth grade language learners, targeting use of the possessive determiners (*his* and *her*) in written and oral tasks. They found that high proficiency language learners benefited equally from both while low-proficiency language learners benefited more from FFI with prompts. The high/low proficiency categories were based upon pretests of the targeted grammar form.

Ellis (2006b) conducted a survey of the research on recasts. He found that recasts tend to be used in a variety of ways by teachers and researchers, ranging from very implicit to very explicit. They can be used in a way to provide positive evidence

(correct examples of language use) or negative evidence (drawing attention to the grammatical mistake). Further, he found that FFI with prompts was most effective in improving grammar during writing tasks.

Mackey (2006) investigated the connection between FFI and noticing, and the extent to which noticing can improve language acquisition. She found that there was a correlation between student reports of noticing the forms and second language development, although this correlation was stronger for certain forms (questions and plural forms) than others (past tense). However, Mackey cautioned that because of a small sample size and complexity of what is being measured, it would be difficult to make definitive conclusions.

Clearly, a lot of research has been conducted on FFI/TBI, however much of it has been experimental and theoretical in nature. Pica (2005) analyzed the research conducted to date and examined ways in which FFI and TBI could be combined through information-gap tasks in the classroom. She asked how these tasks could assist second language learning, retain classroom authenticity, and adhere to the high standards of research. Another important concern was to be able to look at longer term applications of FFI and TBI in the classroom. She concluded that the information-gap task was very useful as an authentic class activity for teachers and as a research tool for academia.

Swan (2005) took a more critical look at TBI. He raised valid methodological concerns regarding the studies that support the use of TBI in the classroom. Furthermore, he observed that there was no research to support the contention that

traditional grammar-based approaches had failed, as had been alleged by supporters of TBI. He concluded that although TBI should not be used as an exclusive guide for constructing the syllabus for language learners, it certainly could be another resource used by language teachers to respond to the diverse needs of the language learners.

As I examined this literature, two points became increasingly clear: (1) more research was needed to understand how TBI/FFI could be used as an effective tool by a language teacher such as myself; and (2) a formulaic approach was not warranted.

Task-Based Writing Instruction

One line of inquiry that had not been previously examined within the research was the use of the writer's conference as a jigsaw task, a two-way information-gap task. I have coined the term *task-based writing instruction* (TBwI) because, as shall be elucidated below, the literature of second language acquisition, applied linguistics, and English language arts (literacy instruction to native-English speakers) makes reference neither in name nor substance to this transformation of a stage of the writing process into a tool for second language acquisition.

As mentioned previously, Lightbown (1998) saw one manifestation of TBI/FFI as a teacher-student dialogue whereby the student would self-correct oral grammar mistakes through incisive teacher questions. A one-on-one conference between the teacher (the native or native-like English speaker) and student (the English language learner) to move a rough draft through the stages of the writing process could be vehicle for incorporating TBI/FFI into the classroom.

I embarked upon a thorough review of the literature to search for the application of TBI/FFI within the context of the writing conference, or perhaps something akin to this without the use of these terms. I consulted several academicians in the area of second language acquisition and applied linguistics. I conducted multiple searches of the ERIC database using various iterations and combinations of terms such as *writing*, *conference*, *task-based*, *form-focused*, *TBI*, *FFI*. I consulted the references section of every single book and journal article cited in this paper. I found nothing.

Regarding the writing process, the literature of second language acquisition and applied linguistics essentially parallels that of literacy instruction for native English speakers. For example, Ferris' (2002) recent treatment on the subject includes both her own research and an exhaustive review of the literature. Teacher involvement in editing student work is treated as a temporary support that should be phased out as the second language learner is taught to independently self-edit and self-correct writing pieces. She addresses the questions of what to correct, what not to correct, and how to get students to notice specific categories of errors through systematic instruction of error classification and various editing strategies (e.g., having the students make multiple passes of editing their work, each time looking for specific error types). This strategy bears a similarity to one manifestation of FFI: *input flood*. With this type of FFI, the student is given a written language sample that has multiple instances of a particular language form (often made conspicuous through a technique such as highlighting or underlining) so that noticing--and by

extension, acquisition--of the grammatical form will occur. However, the writing conference itself is not treated as an authentic language exchange between a native speaker (teacher) and non-speaker (student).

The writer's conference represents one of the few authentic opportunities for a one-to-one interaction between the language learner student and the teacher of a large mixed-ability classroom. The writer's conference is a jigsaw task (a two-way information-gap task) with true negotiation of meaning between a native and non-native speaker centered around a written work. The second language learner enters into a dialogue with a native speaker in order to overcome the limitations of the interlanguage (i.e., student emergent abilities in the second language) encoded within the paper. Furthermore, it is possible for the teacher to construct the writing prompt in a manner that requires or strongly encourages the use of a particular linguistic form. In addition, if instead of marking up the student's paper with proofreading marks, the teacher produces a final draft of the student's paper as a product of the writing conference, then an additional opportunity is created for the language learner student to notice differences between his/her interlanguage and standard English. This would be accomplished by requiring the student to compare the final draft (a product of negotiation of meaning during the writing conference) and the original draft s/he brought to the writing conference; this is accomplished through a followup activity that requires the student to mark up the original draft with proofreading marks by comparing it to the final draft created by the teacher.

Conclusion

In conclusion, a large body of research has highlighted the achievement gap between minority language and native English students within the California public education system. Different groups of minority language students experience different levels of success in achieving English language proficiency. Minority language students experience significantly higher levels of school failure than native English students.

One response to this problem has been a rigid implementation of OCR, based upon research that demonstrates the importance of early phonics and phonemic awareness instruction. Some have contended this reading program (designed for native English students), or perhaps the manner in which it is implemented, does not fully address the diverse needs of minority language students.

OCR is associated with the reemergence of a direct instruction pedagogy that is behaviorist in origin. An examination of learning principles of Piaget and especially Vygotsky leads to the conclusion that one way to meet the diverse needs of minority language students would be to provide targeted differentiated instruction for at least some part of the day. OCR already has built within it a 20 to 40 minute block of independent work time when most students are given the opportunity to work independently while the teacher works with flexible groupings of students to provide differentiated instruction; however, this differentiated instruction typically consists of pre-teaching or re-teaching OCR lessons and pedagogy.

An alternative would be to draw upon principles and practices from the field of second language acquisition to create truly differentiated instruction, consistent with the constructivist pedagogy of Piaget and Vygotsky. One methodology from second language acquisition research and theory is TBI/FFI. A significant line of inquiry within FFI/TBI has been the information-gap task. Information-gap tasks are constructed so that the second language learner needs to interact with someone else (preferably a native speaker) in a manner that simulates an authentic real-world use of language as a tool for communication and exchange of information. A task is TBI/FFI when it includes occasional switches towards focus on form (i.e., focus on grammar) that maintains the primacy of meaning.

While much of the theory and research of TBI/FFI has been positive, it has also been mixed in terms of understanding how to translate this research base into teaching practice that is an vehicle for second language acquisition in the classroom. This review of the literature points to the need for additional research into the use of TBI/FFI as a resource for language teachers to respond to the diverse needs of the students in their charge.

A heretofore unexplored avenue is TBwI, the transformation of the teacher-student writing conference into a jigsaw task consistent with the principles of TBI/FFI. The next chapter outlines the plan and methods formulated to answer my research questions, which crystalized during my review of the literature.

CHAPTER 3, METHOD

Introduction

As the outlines of what would become this study and thesis paper began to form, I realized that a purely quantitative methodology would be inadequate for the questions I wanted to pose. Traditional measures of student achievement examine what the language learner is able to do independently. They measure the fruits of the interaction between student and teacher (i.e., second language acquisition under conditions of independent performance), but not the interaction itself. This is not problematic when the learning cycle is short. It is not problematic when a single skill is taught and assessed in isolation. However, language acquisition is far more complex and challenging. It is a system of many interrelated and interdependent sub-skills that are generally acquired over the course of many years. It is a holistic process that takes place every time the student is posed with a language task, whether in a research facility, public school, or train station. Swan (2005) rightly pointed out that the literature has not demonstrated that TBI/FFI, neither in a clinical nor classroom setting, results in meaningful long-term second language acquisition. Indeed, much of the research into TBI attempted to quantify short-term gains (Ammar & Spada, 2006; Doughty, 2001; Doughty, & Varela, 1998; Ellis, 2006a; Harley, 1998; Lyster, 2004; Mackey, 2006).

Given that language acquisition is a complex process that can span many years (Cummins, 1992), creating a rigorous quantitative study that successfully controls for dependent and independent variables would be both problematic and

unethical. I would have to control and/or monitor all instances of language acquisition over a period of many years. This would mean exerting a level of control over the subjects that would be contravene accepted ethical standards. It would almost certainly also be unacceptable to the subjects and their parents. Thus, I decided to explore other research paradigms.

Several researchers, especially in the area of applied linguistics have taken to Vygotsky's desire to focus on the quality of interaction and feedback between student and teacher. This area of applied linguistics is known as discourse analysis. Cazden (2001) noted that much of this research has been directed toward an analysis of improving quality of interactions between teacher and student or raising consciousness of the powerful impact of peer assisted learning.

Haneda (2004) successfully examined the interactions between student and teacher, with a focus on understanding how the student could take a more active role in the construction of meaning within the writing conference. The study consisted of a transcription and analysis of three writing conferences for each of nine participants. The study was mixed methods in that there was some quantitative analysis, but primarily it was a qualitative analysis of the interactions between teacher and student within the writing conference.

Gibbons (1998) also conducted a qualitative analysis of student-teacher interactions, primarily ways in which teachers could expand upon & recast student language during whole group discussions of science experiments so as to enhance critical thinking and academic language proficiency. Although the method section

did not explicitly state the methodology used, the discussion section indicated that a transcriptions of classroom discourse had been analyzed using purely qualitative methods.

I found that Haneda's (2004) blend of quantitative and qualitative data analysis to be appropriate for the questions posited in this study. Thus, I used a similar mixture of methodological approaches, both qualitative and quantitative. Quantitative measures were used to determine the degree to which TBwI could be an effective vehicle for providing differentiated instruction. Again, a major impetus for this investigation was the degree to which TBwI could address each subject's unique instructional needs (i.e., be an effective vehicle for differentiated instruction) in contrast to the efficacy of the instruction itself (i.e., the amount of measurable second language acquisition). Qualitative data analysis was used to examine how principles of second language acquisition and constructivist pedagogy could be used and incorporated within OCR; in addition it was used to examine evidence for an impact on second language acquisition.

Research Questions

The goal of the current study was to explore the impact of incorporating principles of TBI/FFI, consistent with principles of second language acquisition and constructivist pedagogy, into written language instruction for third grade English language learners. The specific research questions addressed by this study were:

(1) What are the issues involved with using TBwI as communicative language teaching consistent with principles of TBI/FFI & constructivist pedagogy?

(2) How does TBwI impact the degree of differentiated instruction within a mixed ability classroom?

(3) How does TBwI impact second language acquisition?

The research questions were answered through a combination of quantitative and qualitative data analysis from the following data sources: (1) transcripts of writing conferences; (2) subject work samples; and (3) interviews. Whereas traditional research has focused on using recasts and prompts of oral utterances, this study focused on recasting written sentences, thus it was necessary to examine the subject work samples in conjunction with the transcripts of the writing conferences. The interviews were a secondary source of data to examine changes in the subjects' performance.

Research Context

School Site Context

The study was conducted in a single urban public school, which has students from kindergarten through eighth grade. The students were overwhelmingly Hispanic (97.8 percent of about 1,000 students as of the 2005-2006 school year).

Approximately 50 percent of the students were classified as English language learners with Spanish as the first language. Due to overcrowding, the school operated on a multi-track calendar; therefore, at any given time approximately one-third of the students were on vacation. This also meant that there were 163 instructional days instead of 180. Although the school day was lengthened to compensate for this, school district instructional pacing plans necessitated compressing 180 lessons into

163 days. This meant that there was even greater pressure to deliver a standardized curriculum since teachers had fewer days to teach the same number of textbook lessons.

There were 54 teachers on staff, a little under half of whom have over five years teaching experience, which was consistent with my teaching experience and educational qualifications. I selected this school site in part because I had an insider's perspective (see below, *Researcher Participant*) at this school site since I had taught there for about five years when the study began. An *emic perspective* is an important characteristic as one of the research questions asked how authentic communicative exchanges within the context of a writing conference between teacher and student can impact second language acquisition. Thus, it was important that there be some rapport and familiarity between myself and the students akin to the actual teacher-student relationship.

The selection of this school site also made sense because there was a mismatch between its minority language students and the language arts program in use (OCR), which was designed for native English students. The program places strong emphasis on phonics and assumes that children enter into kindergarten as native English speakers.

I also had very personal reasons for choosing my current school. This goes to my original motivation for entering into a masters program. I want to do something to improve my students' academic achievement.

Program Context

Overview. For the primary grades, the focus of this study, the English language arts curriculum is primarily the OCR program. During kindergarten through third grade, the focus is on phonemic awareness and systematic instruction of sound-spelling patterns of letters and sounds (Bereiter et al., 2000). In addition to daily phonics practice, students read decodable books (stories with controlled vocabulary to practice particular sound-spelling patterns), receive mini-lessons in areas such as grammar, the writing process, text structure, and building background knowledge for the readings. They also read from a literature anthology (collection of abridged readings, several of which are group together into thematic units, some of which are related to science or social studies).

In the fourth grade, OCR shifts emphasis from phonics and phonemic awareness to word study. The anthology readings shift to a mixture of narrative (story) and expository (informational) text with increasingly high concentrations of academic language. The school district mandated 2-1/2 hours per day for OCR, although anecdotal teacher comments to me indicated up to 3 hours per day to complete all the OCR mini-lessons and activities. With regards to grammar, a given mini-lesson typically consisted of a whole group direct instruction lesson, then guided practice using worksheets, followed by opportunities to extend the lesson into the students' own writing work.

One of the primary OCR measures of student progress is reading fluency. Reading fluency is defined as the number of correctly read words during one minute

(total words read minus mistakes). One minute reading fluency scores are an integral element of OCR periodic assessment throughout all grade levels. This is important within the context of second language learners. As noted above, Foorman et al. (1998) judged OCR to be successful based upon a very narrow definition of reading fluency. While it might be reasonable to equate reading fluency with literacy for native English speakers, the process of reading is in fact a very complex process (Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2005). Absent comprehension of the language encoded within the printed text, fluency drills simply reinforce the concept that reading and writing are meaningless tasks devoid of communicative intent.

Independent work time. OCR includes an instructional block of approximately 20-40 minutes called *independent work time* wherein most of the class works independently while the teacher works with flexible small groups of students to provide differentiated instruction. This is significant given that much of the criticism of OCR is that the instruction is designed for native English speakers. Teachers at my school faced obstacles in adjusting instruction (i.e., providing differentiation) according to the specific needs of the English language learners in their classrooms, consistent with what I found in my review of the literature on OCR (Moustafa & Land, 2001; Peck, & Serrano, 2002; Achinstein & Ogawa, 2006, Achinstein et al., 2004).

The Program Appendix of *Open Court Reading, Teacher's Edition* (Bereiter et al., 2000) defines two goals for independent work time: (1) develop students' ability to work independently and (2) allow the teacher to work with individuals or

small groups of children to address their specific needs. Suggestions for meeting the needs of English language learners while working with the teacher include: pre-reading selections, pre-teaching vocabulary, and engaging them in small group interactive discussions.

This instructional block of independent work time was of particular significance for this study. It represents an ideal time slot to provide differentiated instruction and thus provided a context for my research questions. During my program of study I encountered research regarding the benefits of interaction between native and non-native speakers. While the original support for TBI had been based upon the ideal of interaction between native speaker and non-native speaker (Long, 1996), the actual reality seems to have fallen short of that ideal (Pica, 2005; Swan, 2005). Indeed, the tension between the constraints of day-to-day practice and the theoretical ideal seems to be a common current in the literature. Critics of Krashen's (1982) input hypothesis found that input alone is not sufficient for second language acquisition (Long, 1996; Swain, 1985). This raises the question of what exactly constitutes sufficient comprehensible input, which has not been addressed by the research. Nevertheless, while an ideal level of comprehensible input is realistic for a child's first language acquisition, a similar amount is may not be for second language students, given the constraints of the classroom.

Thus, in forming the parameters of this study I took into consideration not only the theoretical ideal but also what would be feasible in the real world of second language instruction. The ideal would be an instructional context of 6 hours per day

of one-to-one interaction with a native English speaker. This would be possible under conditions of a dual language immersion program that has a balanced mix of native English speaking students and English language learners (Krashen & Biber, 1988; Thomas, & Collier, 2002). Another opportunity would be to reorient the teacher's participation in whole group discussions to expand students thinking and develop academic language (Resnick & Nelson-LeGall, 1997; Cazden, 2001; Haneda, 2004; Gibbons, 1998).

The third avenue, which formed the frame for my study, was to exploit opportunities for one-to-one interaction between the teacher (native or native-like English speaker) and the language learner student (non-native speaker) within the actual parameters English language teachers work under. The question I posed was how to replicate the results of Long (1996) given a classroom with 20 or more second language learners and exactly one native English speaker. The independent work time block seemed like a perfect vehicle for testing a new type of TBI that would be consistent with the original research of Long (1996) and address the concerns of Swan (2005).

Writing seminar. Writing in OCR is taught as a process: prewriting, drafting, revising, proofreading, and publishing. Bereiter et al. (2000) define the writing seminar as an opportunity (within the revising section of the process) for students to discuss their work in progress as well as to share ideas for improving it. The writing seminar is the single instance within the OCR program that specifically calls for a one-on-one conference between the teacher (native-speaker, or equivalent) and

student (non-native speaker, in the case of English language learners). The goal of the writing seminar is not to teach the student what to write but how to revise.

Besides students meeting in small groups to share ideas about their work, Bereiter et al. recommend the teacher holds individual conferences with the students. It is a time for the teacher and student to review student comments, ask questions to clarify student understanding of the revision process, provide encouragement, and assist the student in formulating an action plan for revision following the conference.

This is consistent with a large body of research in teaching of the writing process in general. Specific to writing for second language acquisition, Ferris' (2002) own experience and research indicates that teacher involvement in the writing process should be a temporary support that needs to be phased out as the English language learner is taught to independently self-edit and self-correct writing pieces. Teaching the ability to self-correct independently is certainly a laudable goal and important for first and second language learners alike. However, the underlying theory and research base of constructivist pedagogy indicates that only through interaction and assisted performance can new concepts and ways of thinking can be successfully assimilated into the student's existing knowledge base (Vygotsky, 1978; Vygotsky, 1986, De Lisi, & Golbeck, 1999; Beveridge, 1997; Gallego Codes, 2004). Furthermore, second language pedagogy relating to comprehensible input (Krashen, & Terrell, 2000), interaction (Long, 1996), output (Swain, 1985), TBI (Ellis, 2003), and cognitive language learning (Skehan, 1998) all point to the need for the English language learner to encounter and interact with valid exemplars of standard English.

Beck, McKeown, & Kucan (2002) have done extensive research into the benefits of a print-rich learning environment. The counterpart to this within the writing process of second language learners would be to make the writing conference an oral-rich encounter specially tailored to each English language learner's ZPD as a English language learner.

Sentence Lifting. After revising, the next step in the writing process is proofreading (Bereiter et al. 2000). One critical aspect of the writing process is for students to notice the errors they make repeatedly so as to not make them in the future. Noticing of errors is solidly based in Piagetian constructivist pedagogy (De Lisi, & Golbeck, 1999) as well as TBI/FFI literature (Mackey, 2006; Izumi, Bigelow, Fujiwara, & Fearnow, 1999; Skehan, 1998; Schmidt, 2001). Also, Ferris (2002) looked at structured methods to provide feedback to English language learners so as to notice their errors and thus decrease the frequency of their occurrence.

Within OCR, students are given a proofreading checklist and taught to understand proofreading marks. Then the teacher explicitly models proofreading through *sentence lifting*. The teacher takes several sentences from student work and models how to make the corrections to the whole class. Students are expected to take responsibility for their own proofreading, to the extent that they have learned various points of grammar and syntax.

The program context of these English language learner students places emphasis on becoming independent writers. Since it was designed for native English speakers, there is an implicit assumption that the students already have a strong

command of the English language. Research and theory within second language acquisition states that it is through interaction with native speakers that second language learners improve their proficiency (Ammar & Spada, 2006; Long, 1996; Long, Inagaki, & Ortega, 1998; Norris & Ortega, 2000).

Participants

Researcher participant

Because I had been working as a teacher at this school site for about five years during the data collection phase of the study, I had an insider's (emic) perspective of the program and the specific needs of the students at this school site. The concept of emic (insider's) versus etic (outsider's) perspective and knowledge comes from cultural anthropology (Morey & Luthans, 1984; Harris, 1979).

I was sole provider of the study's experimental methods. I held a clear teaching credential from the state of California for K-12 students with mild to moderate learning disabilities. I had a certificate in cross-cultural language and academic development, which is designed to support teachers who instruct English language learners not receiving instruction in their primary language. I was a candidate for a masters in teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) from a major urban university. I had seven years experience working with both general education and special education students, ranging from 4 to 14 years of age. I had worked at two schools: the school site (kindergarten through eighth grade) of the present study from which the participants were selected, as well as another school site with similar demographics. During six of my seven years of teaching, I used

OCR as the major component of the English language arts curriculum. Since the study's activities were tied to their OCR lessons, I was able to better simulate the teacher's ability to integrate the independent work time activities with the regular lessons.

Teacher participants

The other teacher participants were the general education teachers of the students selected for this study. As the experimental methods were connected to the English instruction the subjects received during the regular school day, they were involved in the study tangentially. Aside from participating in a post-intervention interview, they were not involved in the study.

Learner participants

The ten participants of this study were selected from a single public elementary school, a feeder school for a large inner city urban high school of California that experiences a high rate of high school dropout. They are referred to in this study as *Participant A* through *Participant I* (nine students, the data for the 10th student was excluded from the data because she could not converse in English). Based upon the participants' English language development level, the study recruited primarily students of intermediate language development who had been receiving English language instruction for a period of four years. The first language of all the participants was Spanish. Their ages ranged from 8 to 9 years old. This age is significant because it represents students at an intermediate level of English language development based upon years of English language instruction. In the fourth grade

there is a transition in the curriculum from learning to read to reading to learn along with a change in emphasis to cognitive academic language. Thus, it seemed appropriate to begin the intervention with students who would be shortly be transitioning to more cognitively demanding language forms.

Potential learner participants were selected from a pool of two third grade classrooms (about forty students). There were five participants from one class and five other participants from the other class.

Recruitment

Ethical Considerations

As participation was voluntary, I felt obliged to provide the participants with a token of my appreciation for sacrificing their after-school free time to enable the study to proceed. At the same time, it was important that the value of the gift not have a coercive effect on them. As the study focused on written language, participants were given a Lamy Safari fountain pen with a converter and a bottle of ink (valued at about \$35). Participants were able to use the pens during the study and keep them when the study concluded. I also gave them an after-school snack, a granola bar for each session which they participated.

I also made myself available for homework assistance at the conclusion of each 45 minute session. During the initial sessions, several participants had concerns that they would not have the time to complete their homework because of the time involved with doing the after-school intervention (especially because several of them were concurrently enrolled in an after-school program that provided homework

assistance). In response to this concern, I remained for an additional 45 minutes after each session to assist them with homework. About four participants availed themselves for this additional assistance, although not consistently. Those who requested additional assistance varied between one to five participants each day.

Participant Recruitment

Approximately one month prior to beginning the study, I spoke briefly to the students of the two classes and explained in student language that I had to work on my own *big homework project* involving writing and learning English and that I was going to need a handful of students to help me with it. I also told them that helping me with this project would not affect their grades nor influence decisions about promotion to the next grade. I showed them the fountain pen and told them that they would receive one for helping me with my project even if they didn't continue all the way to the end. They were given a parent flyer, reiterating the overall topic of the study, the time investment that would be required (approximately 20 hours), participant rights to privacy, voluntary nature of the participation, and that no guarantee of benefits to the participants could be made.

After their parents expressed interest in participation (by signing the parent flyer), a meeting was scheduled with the student and parents. The students, their parents, and the two teacher participants were informed about their rights to privacy, the voluntary nature of participation in the study, and that no guarantees could be made as to improvement in writing nor English language development.

My original intent was to only have 4-8 students participate in the study. However, it ended up that ten students expressed interest in participation, and so I decided to include all ten in the study rather than exclude anyone.

Consent forms were developed in collaboration with the Institutional Review Board approval process preliminary to beginning the study. The primary considerations in designing the consent and information forms were that the participants would be informed of their rights and potential risks involved with participation in the study. The centerpiece of the information meeting was the consent form. They were given an opportunity to read through the document, given to them in advance of the meeting, as well as engage in an open-ended dialogue regarding any other concerns they might have.

Task-Based Writing Instruction

Introduction

TBwI did not exist in the literature, per se. Rather, it is an adaptation of TBI/FFI and served as the instructional treatment for this study. Unlike many other examples identified within the literature review, TBwI is essentially a purposeful oral language exchange and jigsaw task centered on clearly understanding a piece of student-created written language (hence task-based *writing* instruction).

Vygotsky (1986) likens written language to a conversation with a blank piece of paper, lacking both the expressive qualities of oral speech and a live interlocutor. He sees it as a highly abstract form of communication that does not repeat the development of speech. TBwI not only uses written language as a platform for oral

language exchanges, but it also acts as a scaffold to reduce the cognitive complexity of the writing task by providing a live interlocutor.

Three Step Process

TBwI of the present study is a three step process. First, the student is given a writing prompt as a response to literature. This topic sentence identifies some broad theme within a story likely to be suitable for making a text-self connection. The student is given a choice of three possible topic sentences of a paragraph and asked to choose one and write four additional supporting sentences. An example is listed below.

Quote: “The robbers jumped up when they heard that frightful noise, thinking a ghost was coming in, and they ran out into the forest in terror.”
(Roxaboxen, p. 267)

Prompt: Choose one of the three sentences. Write it on your paper and add four detail sentences.

Choice1: I remember a time I was super scared.

Choice2: Sometimes it is hard to be brave if you have too much imagination.

Choice3: When I grow up, I will teach my kids to control their imagination.

Second, the student and teacher sit down together and talk in order to make meaning of the writing (5-10 minutes). During this time, the other students in the class work independently or in cooperative groups on writing activities. The English language learner is the author and the native English speaker (teacher) is the reader. As each sentence is read, a mini-discussion ensues to identify possible disconnects between the writer’s intended meaning and the reader’s actual understanding. The reader might initiate a series of conversational turns with *I don’t understand what*

you are trying to say. In this sense, it is a true jigsaw task because the student has experiential expertise while the teacher has linguistic expertise. Once there is harmony between the author's intended meaning and the reader's understanding, the two work together to recast the sentence from the English language learner's interlanguage into standard English to effectively convey the intended meaning. Finally it is written down, and the two continue with the next sentence. An example is listed below:

NS = native speaker, what I said.

NNS = non-native speaker, what the participant said.

NS: read me the next sentence.

NNS: but I like my old friends [the topic sentence was *I remember a time I tried something new and different*, writing about her first day in a new school away from her friends].

NS: but I like my old friends too?

NNS: yes

NS: I don't understand. are you saying that you want to keep your old friends? or you want to make new friends but you also want to keep your old friends? I don't understand.

NNS: It's because, I don't like to be somebody's friends. I only like my old friends.

NS: So you didn't want to have new friends, you just wanted to keep your old friends?

NNS: Yeah

NS: Okay, so let's change the sentence to say *But I wanted to keep my old friends instead of making new ones*.

Third, at the conclusion of the writing conference, the student leaves with the original rough draft (written interlanguage) and final draft product (recast written standard English) of the TBwI. The student then compares the two written versions and makes editing marks to the original rough draft by comparing the two. Then the final draft is recopied by hand. This gives the student a second opportunity to notice

differences between his/her written interlanguage and the recast version in standard English. An example of these two versions is listed below:

Original: I remember a time I tried something new and different. I was eight years old. Me and my dad went to the building. My dad said there's different stuff in the building. You will have fun with new friends. But I like my old friends.

Recast: I remember a time I tried something new and different. I was eight years old. My dad and I went to the new school. My dad said, "There's different stuff in the building. You will have fun with new friends." But I wanted to keep my old friends instead of making new ones.

TBwI as a Focused Task

Ellis (2003) indicates that TBI can be structured to encourage the use of certain linguistic features, and thus become the subject of instruction (focused tasks). He contrasted this with unfocused tasks, which are not designed to induce the language learner to use a particular linguistic feature. Long & Robinson (1998) characterized focused tasks as *Focus on FormS* and unfocused tasks as *Focus on Form*, in which the task was structured without a specific linguistic focus. In the present study, the greatest barrier to meaningful communication often was not a targeted linguistic feature but some other feature that created the interference to communication. Thus, the principle of primacy of meaning often overrode considerations of targeted linguistic feature. At times the TBwI was consistent with a focused task because the targeted linguistic feature (e.g., use of the simple past tense) did in fact create the greatest interference to communication. Other times it was more consistent with the characteristics of an unfocused task because it was reactive.

Targeted Linguistic Features

Introduction

The tasks were structured such that three linguistic features were targeted for instruction: (1) using correct verb tense; (2) writing complete sentences; and (3) writing coherent paragraphs. There were two broad interrelated rationales for targeting these features. First, the California English language arts standards for the third grade target these specific features. Second, these three features represent different ends of the grammar instruction continuum.

On one end of the continuum, traditional English grammar pedagogy emphasized intrasentence issues such as the ability to correctly conjugate a verb, given the sentence, verb infinitive, and a given tense (Krashen & Terrell, 2000). More recent grammar pedagogy has emphasized inter-sentence issues; Celce-Murcia & Olshtain (2005) stressed the importance of inter-sentence grammar, such as the ability to write sentences that flow and are consistent within the context of the paragraph wherein they are placed. My review of the literature did not uncover previous examples of TBI/FFI investigations specific to these issues.

Standards-based Linguistic Features

Instruction within the California public school system is guided by state standards, goals for student achievement at the end of each school year. The *Reading/Language Arts Framework for California Public Schools: Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve* (Reading/Language Arts Framework, 1999) lists 54 standards for the third grade, broken down into the strands of reading, written

language, listening, and speaking. One of those standards is to create a single paragraph that develops a topic sentence and supporting sentences that provide facts and details. A second standard is to identify and use subjects and verbs correctly while speaking and writing simple sentences.

Given that the participants were working at or below grade level, in part due to their level of English language development, these were the features they were exposed to during the direct instruction and guided practice of their regular classroom. Based upon their grade and level of English language development (fourth year of English immersion instruction), these features were posited to be within the participants' ZPD.

Intrasentence Linguistic Features

Ellis (2006a) examined 17 grammatical structures in terms of explicit and implicit knowledge. Certain structures had a high performance differential between the two. Thus for certain structures a student could acquire explicit knowledge (through grammar mini-lessons, for example), and yet have difficulty in transferring the knowledge to situations that require implicit language usage (usage in real time when speaking or writing). Use of regular past tense (-ed) ranked fourth hardest (only three other structures had a higher score) in terms of transferability of explicit to implicit knowledge. A high ranking meant that a student would score high on a test of explicit knowledge (language learning) and low on a test of implicit knowledge (language acquisition).

Given that verb tense is a difficult concept to transfer from language learning (grammar mini-lessons) to real-time usage, it seemed highly suited to an experimental treatment that targets implicit language acquisition. Therefore, one aspect of the TBwI was to provide the participants with focused tasks which would require this grammatical structure.

Intersentence Linguistic Features

The third targeted feature was the ability to write paragraphs with coherency wherein the various sentences within the paragraph work in concert to develop the main idea. Celce-Murcia & Olshtain (2000) stressed the importance of written text as serving a communicative function. It is possible to write an essay composed of grammatically correct sentences that do not serve a communicative function because the reader does not understand the underlying message. Coherency applies the concept of Grice's (1975) maxims (quantity, quality, relevance, and manner) to written language. In the context of this study, it is the degree to which a topic sentence is developed and supported with sufficient but not excessive information so that the written text can be an effective tool of communication.

Procedure

Instructional Intervention

The instructional intervention consisted in 20 after-school sessions of 20-45 minutes, spread out over 4 weeks. The work product of each weekly instructional cycle followed the following steps: (1) I distributed the weekly writing prompts to the participants and initiated a brief whole-group discussion to ensure that they

understood my expectations and the writing prompts; (2) the participants then independently wrote a first draft paragraph based upon the writing prompt; (3) once the first draft was completed we held a writing conference of about ten minutes; making corrections real-time on my laptop computer, the participant walked away from the conference with both the rough draft and a computer printout of the final draft we created together; (4) the participant then made editing marks and corrections to the rough draft by comparing it against the final draft; and (5) the participant copied the final draft in his/her own hand.

The procedure generally followed these phases. Teacher-student interaction primarily took place during the individual writing conferences, except that at the beginning of each week's intervention, we had a group discussion of that week's writing prompt. The other participants were expected to work independently while I was engaged in the writing conferences.

Data Collection

Introduction. In order to gain a better understanding of the relationship between TBwI, FFI, and language learning within this context, the study used a range of qualitative research methods. In constructing the design, I assumed a complex medley of roles for myself: participant observer, action researcher, and practitioner researcher.

The first element of the data collection process was the actual writing samples of the students. These consisted in the first drafts and final drafts that the students wrote in their own hand.

The second element in the data collection process was to create a clear picture of what actually occurred during the writing conferences. To do this, an audio recording of each writing conference was transcribed and entered into a spreadsheet.

The third element in the data collection process were interviews. The original intention had been to conduct pre- and post-interviews of the students, however the data collected from the students did not provide meaningful information due to their lack of language development and lack of metacognitive understanding. Interviews of the two general education teachers were conducted approximately two months after the conclusion of the intervention to see if there had been any meaningful long-term impact of the intervention.

Work samples. Each participant created at least one rough draft and final draft. Each participant was expected to complete one per week. Each week the participants were responsible for writing four sentences to complete the paragraph prompt (topic sentence) prior to meeting me in the writing conference. Afterwards, the participant was responsible for comparing the handwritten draft and computer printout final draft created during the writing conference, making corrections to the draft by comparing the two, and handwriting a final draft.

Primary data set. An audio recording of each writing conference was made and transcribed into a spreadsheet. Each verbal exchange consisted in one turn. Since each writing conference was a sentence-by-sentence discussion, each turn was linked to one sentence within a given writing conference. This spreadsheet served as the primary vehicle for the data analysis phase.

Interview. At the beginning and conclusion of the intervention process, the participants were asked a series of open ended questions, as follows: (1) why do people write; (2) what happens when people don't understand what you write; (3) what is the most important part of writing; (4) what is it that you don't like about writing; (5) what do you like best about writing, and (6) what are the most important mistakes to fix when you are making your writing better? This interview did not provide meaningful information. Participants were only able to provide formulaic answers amounting to a desire to get better grades in school and make their parents happy. In addition, approximately two months after the conclusion of the month long intervention, the two teachers were interviewed about their perceptions of how the intervention had impacted their students.

Data Analysis

Introduction. The primary data source during the four week study were transcriptions of 35 writing conferences between the researcher and participants. Although there was an average of four writing conferences per participant, some participated to a greater extent than other due to levels of writing fluency and differential levels of attendance during the 20 sessions. *Participant B* participated in seven conferences while *Participant F* only participated in two.

The turns were classified according to two ways: prompt category and target. Prompt category was the type of conversation technique used by me to stimulate language learning. The target category was the particular linguistic feature that was interfering with the task objective.

Prompt category. The first classification was the nature of the prompt. For this, I used the categories from Lyster (2004). His primary categories were Recast, Prompt-Elicitation, Prompt-Repetition, Prompt-Metacognitive, and Prompt-Elicitation. Given the nature of the dialogue, it was necessary to add a couple of extra categories. The first was *Read*, this is a prompt that asked the participant to read a sentence from the writing draft. This was used to initiate a series of turns that revolved around a single sentence. The second one added later was *Statement* because it was found that at certain points I would make observations that did not involve getting a response from the participant.

There were certain classification issues that had to be ironed out during the analysis phase. The transcripts required an analysis of about 929 turns spanning 35 writing conferences. In some cases it was not immediately clear which category a turn should be classified into. But I tried to use a systematic approach to doing the classifications. In cases where prompts had been attempted and failed, and it was clear that the participant was called upon to simply repeat what I had said, then it was classified as a Recast.

In cases where I did not understand the sentence and was attempting to elicit additional information to expand the sentence, it was recorded as a Prompt-Clarification.

In cases where I was attempting to have the participant make a connection to a grammar concept, or in cases where I was attempting to say something like *does this sound right?* then it was recorded as a Prompt-Metacognitive.

In cases where I was attempting to elicit information from the participant, this was classified as a Prompt-Elicitation. A key difference between this and Prompt-Clarification was that with the former we had already established a common schema and understanding of the intended message, with the latter I was attempting to have the participant produce language that accurately represented the intended meaning. This was frequently done by means of a cloze technique (beginning a sentence and then pausing toward the end to give the participant an opportunity to finish the sentence) or two choices (is it THIS or THAT?).

In some cases it was not easy to distinguish the different types, but having one person as the rater helped to ensure consistency in the ratings. I also made multiple passes of the data set to achieve greater consistency. Another issue that clouded the coding of each of the turns was that in many cases there was no clear cut distinction between categories. So, for example, some of the turns involved combinations of more than one category. It often happened that a particular series of turns would end with a mini-lecture by me and then be immediately followed up by a different type of prompt regarding a different grammatical focus. In such cases, the turn was split into multiple turns so that each could achieve purity of prompt category.

Target category.

The final version of target category is listed below:

(a) End Marks (M.End) – these turns deal mainly with developing a concept of what is a complete sentence (or, a complete thought). This was associated with the

need to add periods. In some cases no punctuation marks were included, and in other cases the periods were placed such that it was obvious that the participant didn't have a clear concept of what constituted a complete thought.

(b) Other Marks (M.Other) – this was a very rare category. There were only a few instances of this category. They dealt primarily with apostrophes (indicating possession) and commas.

(c) Quote Marks (M Quote) – This dealt the the conventions of indicating direct speech. It includes the use of an offset comma, quotation marks, and capitalization within the quotation.

(d) Semantics (Sem) – This was a fairly rare category. It dealt with those instances of word meaning that interfered with the ability of the participant to communicate intended meaning. In some cases issues of Semantics were categorized as Schema (see below) where it was caused by an excessive reliance on contextualized speech (that does not rely upon exactness and specificity to communicate a meaning because of shared context and/or schema between the speaker and listener). In some cases, problems with Semantics had to do with a lack of understanding of the prompt.

(e) Prepositions (Prep) – this category dealt both with the use of prepositions as well as phrasal verbs (idiomatic usage of prepositions associated with a particular verb).

(f) Pronouns (Pronoun) – this category was at times closely related to Schema, in cases where contextualized speech had habituated the participant to use

pronouns without clearly stating antecedents because of a reliance on contextualized speech. In other cases, the participant confused nominative with objective pronouns.

(g) Schema (Schema) – This category had to do with sharing just enough—not too much and not too little—information so that the reader would understand. I suspect that it was due to the participant’s lack of familiarity with decontextualized forms of discourse. This category tended to be the area of focus with participants who had greater levels of English language development.

(h) Simile (Simile) – this category occurred rarely, usually when the participant had an inappropriate usage of a simile that would create confusion for the reader.

(i) Syntax (Syntax) – this was a fairly rare category that dealt with improper word order (e.g., I found a dog big).

(j) Topicality (Topicality) – this category was strongly connected to Schema. In cases of a schema focus, additional information usually needed to be added in order to create clarity of expression through a shared schema. With problems of topicality, usually there was extraneous information included in the paragraph that did not develop the given topic sentence. In some cases problems of Topicality were related to issues of Semantics because the participant did not clearly understand the meaning of the prompt. For example, in one case when given a topic sentence *I remember a time I found something by accident*, the participant associated *by accident* with something bad happening and, thus, proceeded to write about how he had become injured instead of writing about how he had once unexpectedly found

something valuable. In another example, the paragraph was written to the prompt *I remember a time I used my imagination to play*, but in fact the participant mostly wrote about events that took place after he had finished playing with his imagination.

(k) Verb Tense (V.Tense) – this category had to do with whether the verb tense is consistent with the given topic sentence. For example, if the prompt was to remember about something that had happened in the past, then all the remembrance sentences should be in the past tense instead of present tense. An example of this was provided in the very first excerpt presented at the beginning of this chapter.

(l) Coherency (Coherent) – this category dealt with the flow of sentences together, the manner in which they were connected. This was one of the finer points of discussion that we addressed when other issues were not quite so pressing.

Reliability and Validity

This was an exploratory study that sought to apply a method (recasts and prompts) developed within the context of oral language development to a new context (written language). Due to the small sample size, it was not expected that definitive answers would be found to the research questions. One of the issues revolved around the reliance upon the transcripts of the writing conferences as the primary data source without triangulation from other data sources. I attempted to use other data sources, including pre/post interviews and participant's editing of the papers. However, these data sources proved to be unreliable due to implementation issues that will be discussed in the following section. Validity and reliability, to the extent possible, was achieved through multiple passes of analysis of the data set so

that there would be consistency in the manner of coding and classification, and that the coding/classification system used reflected the meaning-focused nature of the interactions that took place.

CHAPTER 4, RESULTS

Introduction

As was discussed in the previous chapter, my understanding of the data methods evolved throughout this project. In like manner, my conception of how to present, analyze, and evaluate the data changed over time. At the conclusion of the research project, I had approximately six hours worth of transcribed recordings from 35 writing conferences plus about 60 pages of writing samples.

Once I completed the process of synthesizing and coding the raw data (see the *Procedure* section of *CHAPTER 3, METHOD*), I set about to understand how I could connect this data to my research questions. To do this, I first had to reflect on my research questions and original motivations for beginning this study.

The second research question regarding differentiated instruction was inspired by Long's (1996) investigation into reactive negative feedback and his interaction hypothesis. He paired up native and non-native English speakers in a classroom and provided them with opportunities to interact. His research setting seemed like an ideal linguistic classroom environment of half native speakers and half percent language learners. Similarly, I wanted to create a rich linguistic environment for English language learners in an urban school, working under the constraint of an insufficient proportion of native English speakers.

My personal anecdotal experience and review of the literature had uncovered a need for differentiated instruction such as reactive negative feedback. I found that traditional quantitative measures within statistical analysis were not suitable to

quantify the degree of differentiation within instruction. Therefore, I set about through a trial and error process (see *APPENDIX E*) to ascertain reliable quantitative measures of differentiation. Once I had broken down the writing conferences into discrete turns, categorized the type of exchange (e.g., prompt or recast), and the targeted linguistic feature, I then gauged the quantity of interaction by the quantity of text transcribed (measured in number of characters). This data is summarized in the *Quantitative Data* section. For additional information, please consult *APPENDIX A*.

The primary inspiration for this study had been the seminal work *Thought and Language* (Vygotsky, 1986). This book led to the first question, which was to understand the issues associated with using TBwI as a platform for communicative language teaching principles and constructivist pedagogy. To answer this type of question, it was necessary for me to do an analysis of the transcripts to look for specific instances of my assessment of ZPD as well as examples of interaction that gave the participants opportunity to construct new knowledge. The *Qualitative Data* section (see below) presents this analysis.

The third research question was to examine how TBwI might impact second language acquisition. This was the most difficult question to examine from the data set given the parameters of the study (high degree of differentiated instruction and thus multitudinous linguistic features address over a relatively short span of time). To answer this question I examined the teacher interviews and writing conferences; this information is presented primarily within the discussion of *Qualitative Data* section.

Primary Data Set

The primary data set was the transcript of the 35 writing conferences along with a concurrent analysis of: the (1) sentences within the rough draft, (2) final recast sentences of the final drafts, (3) what the participant said, and (4) what I said to accomplish this. Below is an portion of the Primary Data Set:

Figure 1: Sample Turns within the Primary Data Set

	G	H	I	J	Q	R
	Sentence	Recast	Teacher	Student	P	Target
1						
2	When I get older, I want to go treasure-hunting.	When I get older, I want to go treasure hunting.	Okay, why don't you start by reading the first sentence.	When I get older, I want to go to treasure hunting ... I could ...	Rea	n/a
3	then I gay som mony to my grama.	Then I will give some money to my grandparents.	okay, what's the next sentence?	I give some money to my grand parents.	Rea	n/a
4			Then I give some money to my grand parents ... Wait a minute ... wait a minute ... wait a minute ... You are going to give some money right now?	will	Met	V.Tense
5			WILL, that's right ... you are so smart ... then I WILL give some money to my grand parents ... okay great.	-	Sta	V.Tense

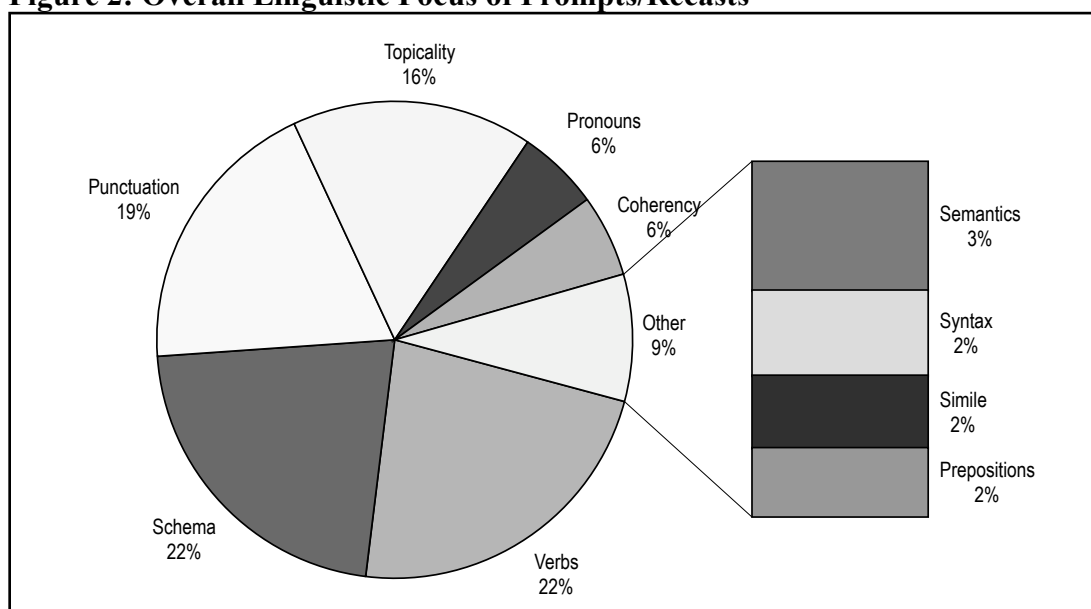
From this exchange, we can see that there were three turns to recast this sentence to the future tense. The given topic for this paragraph was to go treasure hunting in the future so it was necessary for the participant to use the simple future tense. Excluding the Prompt-Read (Rea), a total value of 193 (total length of the text string) was used to recast the participant's sentence from the past tense to the future tense. This was primarily done by means of a Prompt-Metacognitive (Met) to get the participant to state *will*, followed by a Prompt-Statement (Sta) wherein the entire participant's phrase was recast based upon changing *gave* to *will give*. The last turn was categorized as Prompt-Statement as opposed to Recast because the participant was not expected to provide a response and was therefore one-way communication.

Quantitative Data

Linguistic Focus

Figure 2 is a summary of the TBwI that took place over the month long intervention. The percentage of time spent on each linguistic target was based upon a turn-by-turn classification based upon the targeted type. It was generally a reactive form of instruction. As each sentence was discussed within the writing conference, I made a snap decision about what element of language usage posed the greatest barrier to understanding.

Figure 2: Overall Linguistic Focus of Prompts/Recasts



With regards to question two, differentiation of instruction, this data clearly shows that there was a high degree of differentiated instruction. As discussed in *CHAPTER 3, METHOD*, there were three targeted linguistic features: (1) using correct verb tense; (2) writing complete sentences; and (3) writing coherent

paragraphs. Correct verb tense was within the category *verbs* (19% of turns). Writing complete sentences was a subset of the category *punctuation* (*punctuation: endmarks* was 12% of turns). Writing coherent paragraphs was within the categories of *topicality* (16% of turns) and *coherency* (6% of turns). While these three items were certainly addressed during the writing conference, roughly half (53 percent) of turns addressed non-targeted linguistic features.

Comparison of the Overall Linguistic Focus with those of the individual participants (Table 1) provides additional evidence that there was a high degree of differentiated instruction. Please refer to *APPENDIX A* for additional information.

Table 1: Linguistic Focus of Prompts and Recasts

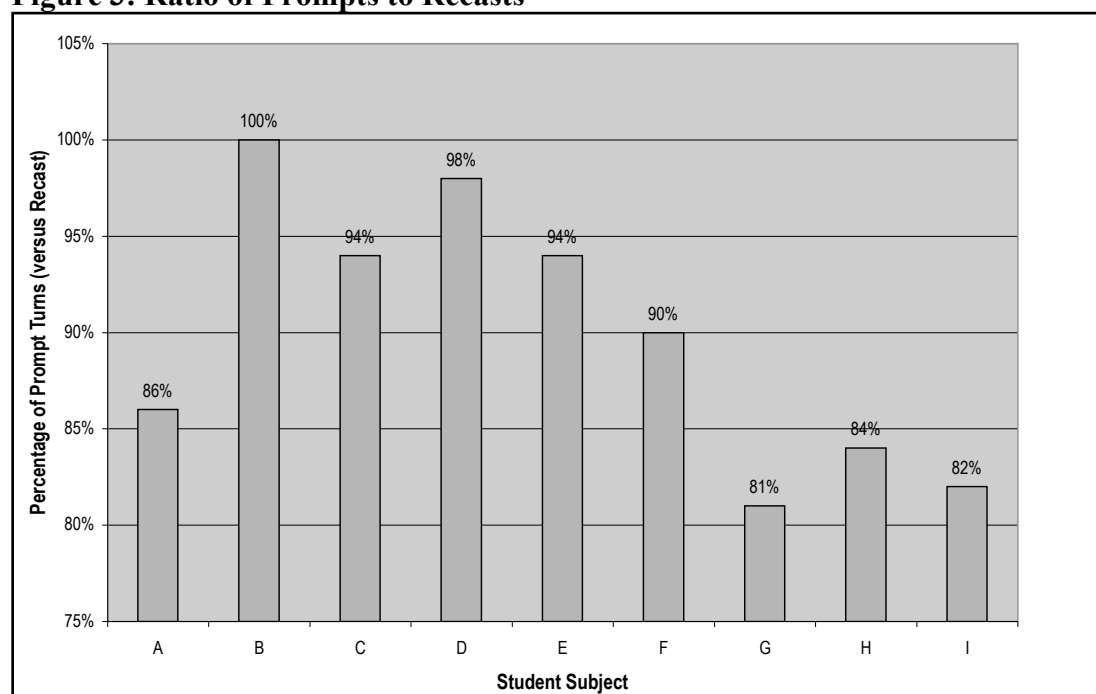
FOCUS	Student Participants									
	Overall	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
End Marks	12%	5%	1%	12%	31%	26%	8%	8%	21%	6%
Marks, Other	1%	-	-	-	9%	-	-	-	-	-
Quotation	6%	-	5%	18%	9%	-	7%	17%	-	4%
Semantics	3%	-	-	19%	-	5%	16%	-	4%	-
Prepositions	2%	-	2%	7%	2%	-	2%	-	2%	1%
Pronouns	6%	-	6%	6%	6%	6%	10%	-	22%	9%
Schema	22%	16%	50%	22%	27%	5%	10%	15%	11%	13%
Simile	2%	16%	3%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Syntax	2%	7%	2%	6%	3%	-	-	3%	-	-
Topicality	16%	3%	11%	-	11%	26%	40%	-	21%	30%
Verbs, Other	1%	1%	-	6%	3%	-	-	-	3%	-
Verb Tense	22%	53%	2%	-	8%	21%	2%	56%	18%	36%
Coherency	6%	-	18%	4%	7%	9%	5%	1%	-	-

For example, the linguistic category *verbs* was a targeted linguistic element and was the overall linguistic focus 22 percent of the time. However, the actual range was from 0 to 56 percent.

Prompts vs. Recasts

The figure below shows the relative use of prompts versus recasts for the Participants (A-I). The percentage was calculated by dividing the number of Prompt turns by the sum of Prompt plus Recast turns. For example, *Participant A* had a total of 36 Prompt turns and 6 Recast turns ($36/[36+6]=.86$).

Figure 3: Ratio of Prompts to Recasts



As can be seen, there was a marked bias for the use of prompts. In essence, recasts were used as a conversation tool of last resort. Prompts were used as tools to coax the participant into recasting the sentence into standard English. When this was

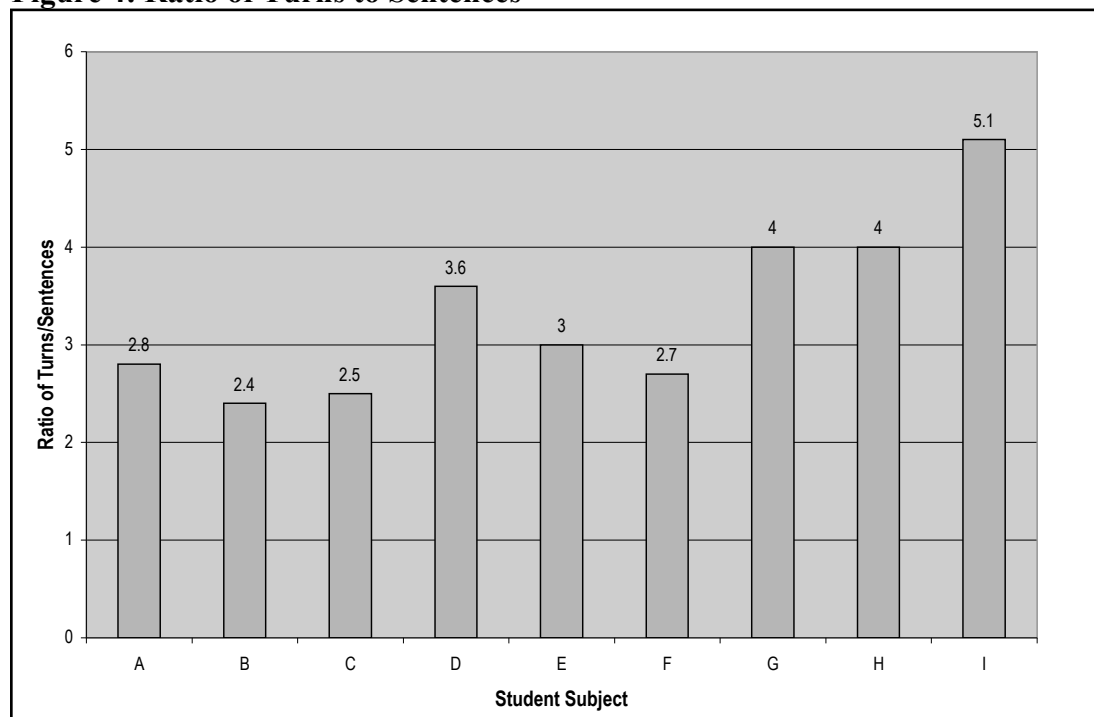
not possible or feasible, I recast the sentence myself into standard English and gave the participant the opportunity to repeat the recast sentence. Using this criteria, prompts were more explicit while recasts were more implicit instruction.

This data addresses Question Two, degree of differentiation of instruction. Clearly, some participants were able to handle more cognitively challenging interaction (prompts). Other participants were challenged to operate within the outer edge of their ZPD, which required me to switch from prompts to recasts to provide additional scaffolding.

Turns vs. Sentences

Figure 5 shows the average number of turns to recast each sentence. It was calculated by taking the total number of net turns (excluding turns prompting the

Figure 4: Ratio of Turns to Sentences



reader to read from the draft) divided by the number of sentences (excluding the teacher-created topic sentence) that were successfully recast into standard English. For example, *Participant B* had 94 turns to 40 sentences ($94/40=2.4$).

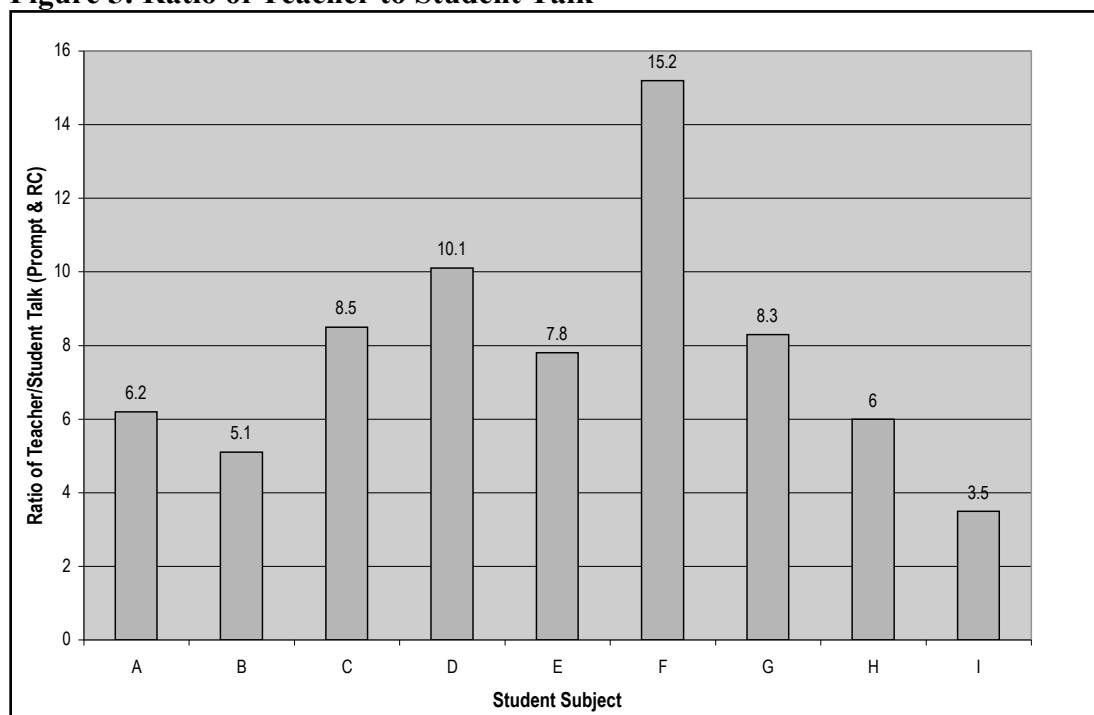
This data along with the previous set gives a sense of the degree of difficulty in guiding the student through this process. *Participant B* required the fewest number of turns to recast his sentences into standard English because of his level of English language development. *Participant H* had a very low level of language development and required additional turns. *Participant I* had the highest number of turns because she had the greatest difficulty in following the pragmatic element of conversation.

This data addresses Question Two, degree of differentiation of instruction. Clearly, some participants required additional scaffolding in the form of additional conversational turns of teacher talk to successfully recast a given sentence from the student's interlanguage to standard English. This additional scaffolding was provided in varying degrees (a ratio from 2.4 to 5.7, indicating average number of turns to recast a given sentence from the student's interlanguage to standard English) according to the participant's needs and the flow of any given interaction. It provides additional indication of differentiated instruction.

Teacher vs. Student Talk

The below data shows the amount of teacher to student talk during the recast and prompt turns.

As stated previously, the amount of talk was quantified by taking the text length within each turn that was transcribed. This measure helps to give some

Figure 5: Ratio of Teacher to Student Talk

understanding as to whether the writing conferences were successful as an efficient tool for language instruction. For example, *Participant B* had a high level of language development and required fewer turns per sentence to recast the sentences. In contrast, *Participant G* had a very low level of English language development, and thus, I needed to talk quite a bit more (e.g., using many closed-ended questions) to make meaning of her writing.

This data addresses Question Two, degree of differentiation of instruction. Clearly, some participants required additional scaffolding in the form of higher quantity of teacher talk to successfully recast a given sentence from the student's interlanguage to standard English. This additional scaffolding provided in varying degrees (ranging from a ratio of 3.5 to 15.2, greater number indicating relatively

more teacher talk) according to the participant's needs and the flow of any given interaction indicates that there was a high degree of differentiation of instruction.

Qualitative Data

Introduction

The qualitative data consisted primarily in an analysis of specific passages of the transcribed writing conferences, the teacher-created writing prompt (topic sentence), rough draft, and final draft. Interviews were also attempted with both the participants and teachers; most of that data was of limited usefulness partly due to my inexperience in conducting interviews and gathering data from these sources. From the interviews and questionnaires of the participants, no conclusive data was acquired. The teacher interviews did yield useful information about academic growth perceived by the teachers.

Interviews

Question Three explored the impact of TBwI on language acquisition. Interviews with the general education teacher of the participants were conducted at about the end of the school year (the interventions had taken place roughly mid-year). Both teachers indicated that the participants' interest in writing and the writing process had either remained the same or had increased as a result of the intervention.

The first teacher found it difficult to comment on the impact of the study upon the participants: "Well, to tell you the truth, I had a very strong writing program myself this year. And I'm having trouble really distinguishing your impact versus mine. They did really improve, but everybody in the class did too." In contrast, the

second teacher observed a marked improvement with the participants' writing. But not all participants improved their writing to the same degree or in the same manner. She indicated that some participants improved their writing fluency, as the following excerpt suggests:

[*Participant D*] would always kind of linger with his thoughts about what he would write. That's not a problem to think before you write, but he had long, sustained periods of thinking before he would write, or he would not want to write. So, specifically for him, he narrowed down that thinking time and actually produced. He would be able to pair/share with somebody else and talk to them about what his topic was going to be and then get right to it.

With other participants she noticed an improved ability to edit and revise, possibly due to a greater awareness of the communicative intent of writing:

With [*Participant B*], I noticed that he was able to go back and re-read his work and check for grammar and notice that if something was written in incorrect academic English. He would try to rephrase it. And so I often noticed that he would go back to proofread.

With some participants, she observed changes in actual sentence writing, possibly as a result of noticing differences between her interlanguage and standard English or perhaps simply due to a greater awareness of audience:

[*Participant C*] used to write with lots of run-on sentences, and sometimes her sentences would make no sense, or she wasn't producing what she was trying to communicate. And after a process of finishing her work and going back and listening to others read her work, then she would stop herself and say, 'Okay, I know what I need to do.' when she heard other people read her work.

Some of the participants seemed to increase their ability to write more cohesive paragraphs, as the first teacher pointed out in this section of the interview:

[*Participant I*] has always been very verbal, but she would get easily off the track and [do] anything to keep talking, on paper or in person. Her writing

became more focused and structured. When she seemed to learn the formula or the knack for putting a main idea and listing some details. She got better at that, instead of just rambling on and on and on.

In contrast, the first teacher noted that *Participant A* had made a lot of improvement in his ability to write more effective sentences.

[*Participant A*] saw a lot of improvement this semester ... he seemed to be able to write more. His sentence structure seems to be a little more complex, using commas in a series, making longer sentences. He struggles so much though, orally.

While teacher interviews were not able to quantify the impact of TBwI on second language acquisition (Question Three), they do indicate that there was a perceived impact on second language acquisition some months after the conclusion of the study.

Primary Data Set

Introduction. As mentioned above, the key elements of TBI are: (1) authentic language use; (2) primacy of meaning; and (3) a communication problem to be solved. An analysis of the transcripts and writing produced many instances that satisfied these criteria. While a traditional writing conference would be focused on training the English language learner to independently write and proofread, the TBwI is focused on conversational interaction that recasts written interlanguage into standard English. The analysis also indicated consistency with constructivist pedagogy (Question One).

TBwI as a jigsaw task. In some cases the problem involved something simple such as correct verb tense usage, as the excerpt below illustrates. *Participant A* was

writing about a time he found something special. There were two problems with this sentence. First, he used the simple present tense *then I find a dog sad* to refer to something happening in the past, which could create confusion for a reader. Second, he used Spanish language syntax for adjectives (*a dog sad* for *a sad dog*). Instead of making the correction for him so that all he would have to do is recopy the sentence, I confronted him with the reader's confusion; then I invited him to supply the correct answer himself, which he did. In the last exchange I use stress/intonation to offer him the two choices and invite him to self-correct the mistake.

Draft = the original sentence from his draft

Recast = the original sentence recast into standard English

NS = native speaker, what I said.

NNS = non-native speaker, what the participant said.

Draft: then I find a dog sdu

Recast: Then I found a sad dog.

NS: Okay, then I ...

NNS: find a dog.

NS: Then I find a dog ... wait a minute! you FIND a dog right now?

NNS: found

NS: found, very good ... *Then I FOUND a dog.*

NS: Okay, so *then I found a dog SAD ... or then I found a sad DOG.*

NNS: a sad dog.

--Conference 08 / Turns 22-27,

This exchange satisfies all the criteria of TBI and is a genuine jigsaw task.

First, he was making a personal connection to a piece of literature. They had been reading about a story character who went treasure hunting and was invited to talk about a time he had done something akin to that. I did not ask him to create a paragraph for the purpose of making red marks on it; instead, he was communicating something of interest to others. Second, there was a primacy of meaning. I showed

genuine interest in learning about the episode he read to me. When I made grammar corrections, it was to help the reader (me) to understand what he was trying to say. There was an occasional focus to grammar, but only within the context of trying to understand his story. Third, there was a communication problem to be solved. As the native English speaker, I had expertise in using written English to effectively convey ideas from writer to reader. Because he was recounting a personal experience, he had expertise about what actually happened that day he found something special. Working together we did a true jigsaw task.

TBwI as a focused and unfocused task. Notice that the above passage also highlights the flexibility of this form of instruction: the ability of the teacher to plan for certain important topics. The participant was given a choice of the three following prompts and told to write four additional sentences to make a complete paragraph:

Choice1: I remember a time I found something special.

Choice2: Sometimes you can find something special by accident.

Choice3: When I get older, I want to go treasure-hunting.

By constraining him to use a single type of verb construction (simple past, modal *can*, modal *want*), I had created a planned opportunity to provide implicit instruction in verb tense usage. I also planned for additional aspects to focus on. Specifically, I wanted to make sure that the participants would have a clear understanding of a complete sentence. As the participant sat down to talk with me, I readied my laptop computer to retype and correct her rough draft based upon our conversation together. My rule was that we would only talk about one sentence at a

time. By reading the story in chunks of one sentence, this aspect of the task became focused towards teaching the concept of a complete sentence:

- NS: okay, so what is the next sentence?
 NNS: *I was eight years old me and my dad--*
 NS: okay, *I was eight years old* ... that's really like one sentence, right? ... okay, so let's call that a sentence ... okay, what does the next sentence say?
 NNS: me and my dad went to the building it was--
 NS: okay, so that's the next sentence, right?
 NNS: yes
 NS: so, *me and my dad went to the building* ... just one thing, I notice here ... ME go to school, does that sound right? ... ME go to school
 NNS: no
 NS: it shouldn't be ME went to school, it should be ...
 NNS: I went to school
 --Conference 06 / Turns 3-8

Notice that in this conversational exchange, as with the previous example, it displays both focused (planned) and unfocused (reactive) elements. By stopping and interrupting the participant as she was reading, I was providing implicit instruction about what is a complete sentence. Also, I had a plausible rationale for having her stop: I was typing her paragraph into my computer one sentence at a time. Unlike *Participant A* of the first example, *Participant I* had no problem with verb tense usage and adjective placement, but she had an unclear understanding of pronouns and nominative/objective case (she wrote *me and my dad* instead of *my dad and I*). This was something I had not planned on teaching, but since it came up in her writing and posed the greatest potential confusion to the reader, I chose to address this linguistic feature. Whether we addressed linguistic features I had planned for or simply problems I reacted to as they arose, those choices were always made in the

context of making the paper easy to read; thus primacy of meaning was consistently maintained during the TBwI.

TBwI and constructivist pedagogy. One key aspect of constructivist pedagogy is that the student has to take ownership in the learning process, that she must actively construct new knowledge and then incorporate that within the schema of previously learned information.

Below, *Participant A* is writing about a future event: going treasure hunting when he gets older. He attempted to use the modal *could* as an alternative future tense construction. However, I wanted him to use *maybe I will* to improve his ability to write with the simple future tense. He was confronted with a cognitive failure (the use of the modal *could* is not an acceptable substitute for the future tense) and attempted to construct new knowledge. Confronted with cognitive failure, he hypothesized that by combining *already* with *went* could be a substitute future tense.

Draft: I cout find som mony.

Recast: Maybe I will find some money.

NS: huh, there is one thing I don't understand about this. Are you going to go treasure hunting right now?

NNS: no, when I get older

NS: So, I usually say *I could*, *I could find some money* or *I could do this* or *I could do that* when I'm talking about something right now. Are we talking about something right now?

NNS: no

NS: okay, so how can we say that, not talking about today but about the future? how can we say that? ... instead of 'I could', we could say ...

NNS: already went to treasure.

NS: okay, but instead of saying *I could*, we could say *maybe I will*, okay? *maybe I WILL find* what would we say, maybe I ...

NNS: I will go.

--Conference 01 / Turns 5-6

TBwI and targeting the ZPD. The ZPD represents what is possible for the student to achieve under conditions of assisted performance. Notice that in the above example, real-time assessment information is used to guide instruction and determine the student's ZPD. In order to recast this sentence into the simple future tense, I began with two turns of metacognitive prompts, attempting to stimulate recall of the simple future tense. Then I did an elicitation prompt, at which point he formed an incorrect hypothesis. Then I realized that I had not given him sufficient scaffolding to achieve this objective. Therefore, I switched gears and recast the sentence by saying *maybe I WILL find*, to which he responded with *I will go*. He did not read the complete sentence but I had accomplished my objective: under conditions of assisted performance he was able to use the simple future tense.

The next excerpt represents a prime example of using TBwI to create rigorous instruction that pushes the envelope of second language acquisition. It also demonstrates second language acquisition occurring in real-time. In this example, *Participant F* was writing about how she will teach her children to use their imagination when they grow up. This was a very cognitively demanding writing prompt because she was not only writing about an abstract concept (imagination) but also about an event that had not yet happened.

Primacy of meaning was maintained throughout. I had planned the task to focus on the use of the future tense. She did not write in the future tense as I had expected. However, it immediately became clear that she did not understand the concept of imagination. If she did not understand the writing prompt then it would

not serve as authentic communication, so I zeroed in on her understanding of *imagination* rather than the other issues. Pay especially close attention to the last conversational turn. Over the course of six turns I provided her with assistance so that she could construct an understanding of *imagination*; on the very last turn I ask her to read the next sentence she wrote in her draft: *I drewed a frog*. I had just recast the first sentence to read: *my teacher said to draw a picture of a frog*. She then self-corrects and instead of reading the sentence she wrote, she states, *I imagined a frog dancing*. This exchange is consistent with Vygotsky's (1986) conception of writing as a highly cognitively demanding task akin to conversing with a blank sheet of paper. Under conditions of assisted performance she was able to actively construct new knowledge and refine her understanding of cognitive academic language (i.e., the word *imagination*). In the process, we witness in real time her assimilation of new information in her second language.

- Draft: One day my teacher said to draw a imagination. I drewed a frog.
 Recast: One day my teacher said to draw a picture of a frog and use my imagination. I imagined a frog dancing.
 NS: okay, what is the next one [sentence]?
 NNS: *One day my teacher said to draw an imagination.*
 NS: to draw an imagination?
 NNS: to draw a picture
 NS: to draw a picture, to draw a picture of an animal?
 NNS: an animal, a frog
 NS: to draw a picture of a frog ... and what were you supposed to USE?
 NNS: huh?
 NS: what were you supposed to USE? you ...
 NNS: imagination
 NS: so one day, my teacher said to draw a picture of a frog and ...
 NNS: use my imagination.
 NS: use my imagination. okay, and is this telling us what we are going to do when we grow up?

NNS: no
 NS: okay, next?
 NNS: *I imagined a frog dancing.* [self-corrects while reading sentence]
 --Conference 17 / Turns 23-30

In another example, *Participant A* wrote about a rock he had found one day. He described it as *like brand new*. This did not make sense to me because rocks are millions of years old; they cannot be brand new. What he was trying to say was that it looked *like* something brand new. Therefore, I devoted seven turns to helping him recast the sentence into *It was like a brand new toy*. It was something he was incapable of doing under conditions of independent practice (typical testing conditions), but under conditions of assisted performance he was able to achieve this extremely cognitively challenging task.

TBwI as a form of communicative language teaching. What becomes clear through reading all the transcripts and fully digesting what transpired during that month is the power of communicative intent. To a second language learner this can be both a source of frustration and inspiration. When a strong motivation (harnessed by communicative intent) was present, it was possible to create cognitively demanding interactions between myself and the participant. The effectiveness of this constructivist pedagogy seemed highly correlated to motivation.

On the high end of the English language development spectrum was *Participant B*. In the following passage he is writing about a time he was really lucky. He asked his father for three dollars but received four because there was a new bill that stuck to the other three. What is interesting is that he self-corrects.

- Draft: He gave me three but when I check to see if he gave me really.
 Recast: He gave me three dollars. When I checked to see if he really gave me three dollars, I saw one more dollar.
 NS: okay [read the next sentence]
 NNS: *he gave me three dollars, but when I checked to see if he really gave me three dollars.*
 NS: ah, so you say, *When I checked to see if he gave me REALLY ...* so you changed that to be *if he REALLY gave me* [nss self-corrected while reading his sentence].
 --Conference 16 / Turns 2-3

Participant B displayed no difficulty with the targeted linguistic features.

Nevertheless I remained focused on the communicative aspect of writing. In the excerpt below he came to grips with the unique aspect of written communication: lack of a shared context between writer and reader. His sister asked him to *do the milk* for his baby sister, but I didn't understand what he meant. As the reader, I was struggling to understand his intended meaning. By working together we were able to make his writing a more powerful communicative tool. Note that TBwI as an jigsaw task was subtly altered for him; it was not my expertise as a native speaker, but rather my perspective as the reader and live interlocutor that most benefited him.

- Prompt: I remember a time I tried something that was hard to do.
 Draft: it was when my sister told me to do milk for my baby sister.
 Recast: it was when my sister told me to prepare the milk for my baby sister.
 NS: for my baby sister? ... okay *do milk* is kind of ... so let's see if we can make this ... because I don't quite understand when you say, *do milk* ... you mean that you ... what did she want you to do?
 NNS: make the bottle of milk
 NS: she wanted you to PREPARE the bottle, or she wanted you to FEED the baby?
 NNS: to prepare
 NS: ah, *She told me to prepare the milk for my baby sister.* ... okay, that's good.
 --Conference 24 / Turns 2-4

But participants at the lower end of the English language development spectrum also benefited from this approach, precisely because of motivation.

Participant G participated in five writing conferences, but only three were successful (i.e., resulted in an authentic communicative exchange and a final draft). The excerpt below was her first attempt at a writing conference. She wrote about how one can find something special by accident. When I asked her to read her writing, she could not. When I offered to orally transcribe her paragraph to me, she could not.

Draft1: the illas sientheri anshe ranche

Draft2: chanacx the rienteu the riendango

Draft3: the man ret sad the sanche and the sanche canchez melisahez chancez and

NS: okay, so what is your second sentence?

NNS: the ... the ...

--Conference 04 / Turns 3-7

Her second attempt at a writing conference also ended in failure. She attempted to write about how it is important to help one's parents in hard times, about a time she helped her parents to paint the house. Somehow the two of us (reader and writer) got completely lost, thinking that it was dealing instead with wild animals in ancient times.

Draft: that there o there tan thaki the roero that the romeronchez to the romero that the carthe thea the cur was hawer Merour Melissa Sanchez wa to hav the Kerome the carwas Lhero.

Recast: You should help your mom and dad with painting the house.

NS: okay, good, what is the next sentence?

NNS: there ... there ... a leopard ... that ... live ... roman

NS: in the city of Rome or in Roman times?

NNS: roman time

--Conference 20 / Turns 1-10

Finally on the third try she was able to perform a successful writing conference. Just before the writing conference of the excerpt below, I observed her practicing to read her draft several times prior to sitting down with me, as if she were trying to commit it to memory. She also enlisted the help of a couple of other participants. What I display below is not the actual writing conference, which totaled 66 turns, but rather a comparison of the draft to recast sentences. By comparing it with the previous two samples, tremendous improvement can be seen. It was the power of communicative language teaching that motivated her to struggle through a very difficult task.

prompt: When I grow up, I will teach my kids to listen and pay attention.
 1draft: my kids was to lafen when the techer sad no lafen pless kids
 1recast: My kids will not laugh when the teacher will say, "No laughing please kids."
 2draft: oke mes sad the kids
 2recast: The kids will say, "Okay Ms."
 3draft: the techer sad can to the for saod the techer pless
 3recast: The teacher said, "Can you stop please."
 4draft: kids oke techer
 4recast: Then kids will say, "Okay teacher."
 5draft: he red a books to the kids.
 5recast: Then he will read books to the kids.
 --Conference 34

Not all the writing conferences were equally successful, but these excerpts are reflective of the powerful aspect of communicative language teaching.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the results answer the three questions of this study to varying degrees.

Regarding Question One, TBwI as a form of TBI/FFI and constructivist pedagogy, qualitative data analysis indicates that TBwI was a jigsaw task that provided meaning-focused interaction between myself, a native English speaker, and the participants, English language learners. There was authentic language use and a definite communicative intent as we worked together to recast interlanguage embedded within the writing drafts into standard English. Each of the two persons had a critical expertise that needed to be used in concert. I the teacher had linguistic expertise of English while the participant had experiential expertise of the actual text-self connection that was being made.

Regarding the question of incorporating constructivist principles, the two primary principles focused on were the my ability to work within a participant's given ZPD (at both the high and low range) and provide varying degrees of support that stopped short of explicit instruction to allow the participant the opportunity to notice differences between the written interlanguage and standard English as well as the freedom to make linguistic hypotheses and receive immediate feedback regarding them, thus, creating additional opportunities to assimilate rather than accommodate new learning.

Regarding Question Two, the impact of TBwI on differentiated instruction, the data set demonstrates qualitatively and quantitatively that differentiation of instruction can indeed be measured and quantified. Across a variety of measures, the data show that in TBwI was effective in providing differentiated instruction to the participant students.

Regarding Question Three, the impact of TBwI on second language acquisition, the data set was not conclusive. Because the focus of data collection was on the writing conferences themselves rather than pre- and post-intervention measures, because of the wide variety of linguistic items targeted, because of a lack of triangulation of data sources, because of the complex and long-term nature of second language acquisition, the data set was not able to demonstrate measurable gains in second language acquisition. However, the data set provides some indication that TBwI may have impacted second language acquisition for at least some of the student participants.

In conclusion, the month long experimental intervention was successful in beginning the process of understanding how TBwI may be a useful form of communicative language teaching that incorporates principles of constructivist pedagogy and second language acquisition as well as impact the level of differentiated instruction in a classroom of English language learners.

CHAPTER 5, DISCUSSION

Introduction

The original impetus for this project had been to understand the impact of incorporating pedagogy of second language acquisition and constructivism into a classroom of second language learners. I was exposed to the literature from these fields, and what followed was an investigation about turning theory into practice. How could I enhance a structured English curriculum that emphasized explicit direct instruction? How could I incorporate principles of second language acquisition and constructivist pedagogy? How would this impact the students' learning? Could I increase the ability of the classroom teacher to provide differentiated instruction that would effectively target the upper band of each participant's ZPD? Would this result in second language acquisition? These were my questions.

With regards to Question One, understanding the issues involved with incorporating principles of second language acquisition and constructivist pedagogy into instruction, the results demonstrate that TBwI is a valid tool for incorporating these principles into the classroom of second language acquisition.

However, there are no simple and pat answers to the challenges of education. In search of simple answers, the pendulum of education policy sometimes swings from end of the spectrum to the other. TBwI is a highly differentiated form of holistic instruction with an emphasis on reactive negative feedback. In contrast, OCR is a program that emphasizes explicit whole group instruction. The challenge for educators is to arrive at a synthesis of often contradictory teaching methods and

focus on the needs of the students rather than dogmatic positions. As such, TBwI may be a useful element of successful instruction.

Question Two asked how TBwI might impact the degree of differentiated instruction within a mixed ability classroom. Analysis of the data set shows that TBwI provided a high degree of differentiated instruction. Each participant received interaction that was uniquely different from the others along the implicit-explicit teaching continuum. The actual mix of topics discussed was also varied.

Question Three asked how TBwI might impact second language acquisition. Based upon analysis of the data, personal reflection, and teacher interviews, it appears that TBwI did impact second language acquisition to some extent for at least some of the participants. Given the short amount of time and complexity of the language acquisition process, it was difficult to quantify this.

Q1, Using TBwI in the Classroom

The first research question was to identify the issues associated with using the writing conference as a platform for communicative language teaching consistent with principles of TBI/FFI and constructivist pedagogy.

Programs such as OCR arose because of a concern that some students need explicit instruction in order to learn a given subject matter and do not learn it simply as a result of exposure through more implicit methods. The rebuttal from constructivist pedagogy is that not all learning is created equal: some results in long term retention and some does not. They point to the distinction between assimilation and accommodation, with the latter resulting in only short term retention of the

learning because it isn't connected and integrated into the students' existing bank of knowledge.

TBwI is consistent with an assimilation model of learning. One aspect of this was the presence of a live interlocutor while revising the rough draft. The student participants were already familiar with a narrative oral discourse structure between two live interlocutors. Having received formal English instruction for 3-4 years, the participants were already familiar with how to orally recount an experience to another person. Consistent with Vygotsky's (1986) understanding of written discourse as a conversation with a blank piece of paper (cognitively more challenging because of the absence of the reader and a lack of shared contextual knowledge), they had greater difficulty expressing themselves in written English. Changing the writing conference with TBwI allowed me to simulate a reader's difficulty in understanding the text. Thus the participant was given the opportunity to compare and contrast existing knowledge (communicating to a live interlocutor with a shared contextual knowledge) with new knowledge (having a conversation with a blank piece of paper). The teacher interviews indicated that in at least one case, the participant had perceived gains in terms of awareness of audience and ability to self-correct. This was also born out from an analysis of the writing conference transcripts which had multiple instances wherein the student participant self-corrected a sentence as s/he read it to me.

Another tenant of constructivist pedagogy is that assimilation can only occur once a cognitive failure is acknowledged. Given the meaning centered nature of

TBwI, the focus was on recasting the participant's interlanguage into standard English. The starting point for this process almost invariably began with *I don't understand*. Every time this happened, the student participant was confronted with a cognitive failure (the student's interlanguage did not result in an authentic transfer of meaning from the writer to the reader). The student participant then participated in a dialogue to recast the sentence into standard English.

Another aspect of constructivist pedagogy was the use of prompts and recasts as a means of implicit instruction. Clearly, there is already a lot of literature as to situations where prompts (more explicit) have greater efficacy than recasts (more implicit); however, within a mixed ability classroom there will be situations where both will be useful. With TBwI, recasts were used only in situations where the participants were unable to engage in more active participation in a joint construction of meaning. It was a tool of last resort. Prompts allowed the participants greater voice in the process of recasting the draft sentences and as such created more opportunities for them to actively participate in the learning process.

Within the realm of second language acquisition, there are many and often contradictory voices. TBwI is consistent with many ideas posited by Krashen and Terrell's (2000) natural approach, principally that second language learners need to have sufficient comprehensible input and that motivation is an important factor. Providing the second language learner with specific feedback and recasting written interlanguage into standard English was an effective means of providing comprehensible input. No prior knowledge nor schema needed to be activated

because the writing conference revolved around the participant's own text-self connections within their writing. Second, they had a genuine desire to be understood by me and, thus, there was a strong aspect of motivation, consistent with Krashen's affective filter hypothesis (Krashen & Terrell, 2000).

Consistent with Long's (1996) interaction hypothesis, the participants (English language learners) were given a chance to dialogue with a native English speaker in order to make meaning of a given text. Consistent with Swain's (1985) output hypothesis, they were required to express themselves in English and take greater ownership in revising the sentences through a judicious mix of prompts and recasts.

One of the challenges discussed by Ellis (2006b) and Swan (2005) was the need for TBI/FFI to be meaning centered and result in an authentic language use through a communication problem. TBWI satisfied this theoretical ideal of a jigsaw task because the two interlocutors each had a unique area of expertise. The native speaker had linguistic expertise while the participants (non-native speakers) had experiential expertise. The task was meaning centered and posed a communication problem that needed to be solved (*viz. I don't understand*).

One aspect of constructivism that was not followed were structured opportunities for prewriting activities. A key tenant to constructivism is that the student must assimilate new knowledge with the existing knowledge base. This posed a greater problem with the more cognitively challenging writing prompts (e.g., writing about *imagination*) and certain idioms. For example, *Participant H*

understood the idiom *by accident* to mean something negative and, thus, misunderstood the prompt. This could have been better addressed beforehand by structuring more prewriting activities instead of simply having them write immediately.

In addition, the process lacked follow-through. I had believed that the communicative intent would have been to publish (read) these texts to their peers, and that I would simply be a surrogate interlocutor, doing a task to help them publish their writing. In fact, I was the intended audience! The participants had a strong communicative desire for me to understand their ideas. It was this motivation as much as anything else that sustained them through the hard work of these tasks.

Also noteworthy is that by using prompts (more explicit reactive negative feedback) and then resorting to recasts (more implicit) when the prompts did not work, I was constantly striving to maintain a level of assisted performance attuned to the their ZPD. In this respect, written tests (measures of independent performance) are not relevant. In these situations the teacher needs a reliable measure of the student's capabilities under conditions of assisted performance. In other words, TBwI is not a one way flow of information from the teacher to the student. It is a constant back and forth flow of information; thus, the teacher needs to be as good a listener as a communicator.

Much of the literature on TBI shows that it has yet to live up to the potential trumpeted by its proponents. Often the problem is a lack of authentic language use or authentic communication problem, the students are simply thrown together prompted

to talk with each other for lack of native English speakers in the classroom. The tasks can have an artificial or stilted feel to them. However, making written text-self connections is an authentic use of language and recasting the written interlanguage into standard English is in fact an authentic communication problem that needs to be solved. Thus, TBwI can be effective for pairing up the teacher and student together in a jigsaw task. Also, pairing up the native and non-native speaker in dyads remains true to the research of Long (1996), whose participants were paired into dyads of native and non-native speakers. It is also consistent with the theories of Krashen (1982) that comprehensible input and motivation (i.e., low affective filter) are key elements to successful second language acquisition.

Q2, TBwI and Differentiated Instruction

The second research question asked how TBwI impacts the degree of differentiated instruction within a mixed ability classroom. Clearly, both the qualitative and quantitative data analysis indicate a high level of differentiation of instruction through TBwI. Although there was a common element of certain targeted linguistic features (verb tense usage, complete sentences, writing detail sentences connected to a give topic sentence), the actual content of each writing conference varied according to the participant's instructional needs at the moment because I responded (provided reactive negative feedback) to the most challenging element of the written interlanguage within the context of a particular sentence and paragraph. The mix of explicit/implicit instruction (as measured by the ratio of prompts to recasts) also varied for each participant. The amount of scaffolding provided (as

measured by the ratio of turns to recast sentences) also varied with each participant. Those who required more support received more while students who needed less support received less. Thus for these particular students, TBwI was effective in providing differentiation of instruction.

Q3, TBwI and Second Language Acquisition

The third research question was to understand how TBwI impacts second language acquisition. This was perhaps the most challenging of questions to answer because from the data set we must extrapolate to the endpoint of a multiyear process. The teacher interviews also point to the potential of TBwI as having long term benefits, at least in the case of some of the participants. The data set does not offer conclusive information whether there was meaningful long term language acquisition. It is possible, however, to observe that TBwI represents a teaching strategy that is consistent with our understanding of the learning process and second language acquisition theory.

Recommendations for Practitioners

Public education in California, for better or worse, has evolved to have greater accountability and higher expectations. Public policy makers have sought to solve societal problems through higher academic expectations. By raising the bar of higher expectations, it was hoped that student achievement would increase.

This trend, while laudable, has had certain unintended consequences. First, there has been an increased emphasis on fast-paced direct instruction in classrooms of low performing students. This grew in part from a belief that low ability students

with an external locus of control need a fundamentally different kind of classroom focused on delivering direct instruction and behaviorist pedagogy.

Rather than wait for such students to grasp a concept through a discovery approach, it is much faster and efficient (from this perspective) to very explicitly give the student the answer. In this manner it is possible for a teacher to cover more material in a shorter period of time. Unfortunately, it has also tipped the balance in favor of accommodation rather than assimilation (the student actively incorporating concepts and language into already internalized knowledge).

But students need to be presented with opportunities to test hypotheses under conditions of assisted performance. The present study placed a strong emphasis on eliciting language hypotheses from the minority language students through the use of prompts, provided they were within the participants' ZPD.

Thus, my first recommendation is that students be given genuine opportunities to test and reflect upon their language hypotheses and assumptions about how the second language works. Prompts will not produce novel results if they are administered by teachers in a formulaic manner that does not allow for this.

The second unintended consequence of raising the bar of academic expectations has been to equate higher expectations with higher motivation. While there is a correlation between the two, it is not one-to-one. Human motivation is a very complex phenomena. Communicative language approaches can be very effective if they tap into the very powerful motivations for communication: to understand and be understood, to achieve acceptance and status within a social

group. The participants were engaged in the tasks because of a genuine desire to use language as a social tool. In other words, they were highly motivated.

Thus, my second recommendation is that TBwI be used with writing prompts that enable authentic written communication, such as tapping into powerful student experiences that serve as text-self connections. I still remember very clearly the moment that *Participant C* recounted her mother asking for her help because she couldn't read the note the postman had left. That was a very powerful experience for her, and she was seemed willing to move heaven and earth to make me understand that experience as well.

My third recommendation is that TBwI be used as a tool to supplement (not supplant) other forms of instruction for second language acquisition and writing. While it is important that students receive some amount of individualized instruction, it is not feasible to expect that a substantial portion of instruction can be delivered on such an individualized basis. What is perhaps more reasonable is that they receive effective instruction in language and concepts through more traditional means, and that TBwI be simply one additional opportunity for students to test and reflect upon language hypotheses as well as receive reactive negative feedback and comprehensible input from a native English speaker (the teacher).

Policy Implications

During the era of whole language, English was taught holistically. Explicit instruction of text structure, reading strategies, phonics and phonemic awareness was de-emphasized. During the current era constructivist pedagogy, holistic instruction

and a focus on meaning tend to be de-emphasized. Within the arena of second language acquisition we see a similar phenomenon in terms of the debate regarding the role of grammar in the instructional syllabus and the optimal point within the implicit/explicit instructional continuum.

It is clear that completing that volume of writing was no easy task for them. Listening to someone confront them with their mistakes during the writing conference was no easy task. Through prompts, I was constantly confronting them with their own cognitive failures and challenging them to assimilate new information. A form of learning like this will not work unless the student has a high degree of motivation.

Therefore, it is noteworthy that this constructivist pedagogy worked for *Participant A* (medium), *Participant B* (high) as well as *Participant G* (low). They represent various points along the ability spectrum. What seems to have happened in California's classes, according to Achinstein et al. (2004) and Achinstein & Ogawa (2006) is the development of a two-tier educational system, with students of low socioeconomic status and minority language students receiving mostly direct instruction and behaviorist pedagogy. O'Neill (1988) provides the key rationale for this when he makes an association between *low ability pupils* and *external locus of control*, which is a polite way of saying that they lack motivation to learn. This is ironic because one of the strongest cultural imperatives of humans is to listen and be listened to, to use language as an authentic tool for communication. This holds true for minority language students with mental retardation, those with genius level

intelligence, and all points in between. If the teacher is able to tap into this motivation then they will rise to the challenge of constructivist pedagogy.

Therefore, one of the policy implications of this research is that teachers need to become more aware of a possible bias towards a two-tier educational system: education for high ability pupils that is based in constructivist pedagogy and education for low ability pupils that is based on behaviorist pedagogy and direct instruction. So called low ability pupils within the classroom may respond well to more implicit forms of instruction that are centered in constructivist pedagogy, provided that the student is able to make a connection to existing knowledge and the teacher is skilled at maintaining instruction within the ZPD.

What can be said with certainty is that not all methods and approaches will work equally well for all students. Within the context of OCR, this realization has led to a push for differentiated instruction. Paradoxically this trend has occurred along with a concurrent push for uniformity of instruction and fidelity to a district intended curriculum.

Clearly, one of the strongest policy implications that emerges is that research and theory from second language acquisition and constructivist pedagogy do have a valid place in the discourse of instruction of minority language students. The analysis of the data does not indicate OCR and direct instruction to be ineffective nor does it warrant replacing the current curriculum with 2-1/2 hours a day of mandated TBI, FFI, or TBwI for the minority language students. However, the literature and this study do indicate that constructivist pedagogy (to which communicative language

teaching is related) does have a valid place with minority language students for at least some portion of the school day, at least for some students and under some conditions.

Somehow, educators and education policy-makers need to challenge the notion that minority language students need direct instruction in place of constructivist pedagogy because of an association of *low ability pupil* with *external locus of control*. The analysis of the data in this study indicates that, at least for these third grade minority language students and in this particular context, there was no correlation between ability level and need for behaviorist pedagogy.

Research Needed

Clearly, more research is needed to follow up this study regarding the viability of TBwI as an instructional tool. Studies of longer term, with different age groups and language ability levels, are needed to determine whether TBwI can be an effective tool for second language acquisition. More research is also needed to understand the impact of actually incorporating TBwI into the school day of an OCR classroom instead of simply simulating that through an after school intervention.

Furthermore, more research is needed to understand whether TBwI can be successfully implemented with students of other ages and stages of language development.

One of the great challenges of research in the area of second language acquisition is the long term nature of the process and the multitudinous variables that affect language acquisition. Clearly it is a complex process; however, it is also a very

important process that needs to be better understood so that teacher-practitioners have a greater understanding of how to connect theory to practice.

Conclusion

Results indicate that TBwI can be a useful tool for providing differentiated instruction, constructivist pedagogy, and principles of second language acquisition into the classroom to respond to the diverse needs of the language learners

Upon analysis of the data set and reflection of my personal experience through this process, one broad theme emerges. To teach with success requires hard work, content area expertise (in this case, English) and a clear understanding of teaching pedagogy. But even more important, it requires that the teacher have empathy for the student. Second language acquisition is far more difficult than second language teaching. If successful second language teaching can be likened to climbing Mount Everest, then successful second language acquisition might perhaps be likened to climbing Jacob's ladder. Furthermore, learning to have a conversation with a blank piece of paper is no easy task, neither in a second language nor the first. An empathetic student-centered approach that harnesses the power of communicative intent inherent to all languages and a non-dogmatic approach to implementing teaching pedagogy will not guarantee second language acquisition, but under the right conditions it will optimize the minority language student's opportunity to learn.

These right conditions include creating an opportunity where there is a primacy of meaning that taps into a strong current of motivation. Many times as a teacher, I have been challenged by a minority language student who was not

motivated to complete tasks nor remain focused during a lecture/presentation. The participants, on the other hand, seemed genuinely interested in helping me to understand their text-self connections (their written drafts were personal connections to quotes from literature they were reading during the regular school day). And when I confronted them with a communication problem (that I didn't understand one aspect or another of their writing), they seemed genuinely committed to helping me to understand their viewpoint. As Smith (1988) pointed out, instructional activities with no intrinsic meaning that exist only to be graded should be avoided because they are not effective in tapping into this current of motivation. Bley-Vroman (1988) noted the distinction between first and second language learning, that the former is almost universally successful while the latter frequently is not. Perhaps one reason is the very strong motivation (often a matter of survival) of the infant to understand and be understood by his/her caretakers. Using TBwI will not guarantee a high degree of motivation and success, but at least within the context of this study it did effectively maintain student interest and motivation to have a conversation with a blank piece of paper.

GLOSSARY

Assimilation: In constructivist pedagogy, the process by which new information is incorporated with knowledge already internalized (De Lisi & Golbeck, 1999)

Behaviorist Pedagogy: A teaching method that emphasizes the ability to learn new information through repetition and structured practice.

Coherency: The degree to which sentences within a paragraph are connected to each other through a given topic sentence (Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2005).

Constructivist Pedagogy: A type of teaching that emphasizes the need for a learner to actively participate in the learning process by incorporating new information into his/her previously internalized knowledge base (De Lisi & Golbeck, 1999).

Cross-Cultural Language and Academic Development (CLAD): A supplementary certificate for teaching credentials issued by the state of California authorizing teachers to provide English instruction to students whose first language is not English.

Differentiated Instruction: Instruction that varies according to the instructional needs of students in a multi-level or multi-ability classroom.

Direct Instruction Pedagogy: A type of teaching method that emphasizes fast-paced and explicit instruction that may be highly scripted O'Neill (1988).

English Immersion Instruction: A instruction for public school students whereby the teacher may not speak in the students' first language except to clarify directions.

English Language Learner: A student who is learning English as a second language.

Fabric of Concepts: Vygotsky (1986) used this metaphor to the characterize the interconnected nature of a child's internalized bank of knowledge.

Focus on Form: Long & Robinson (1998) describes this as a type of language instruction that is holistic, focused on meaning, with some grammar instruction within the context of a focus on meaning.

Focus on FormS: Long & Robinson (1998) describes this as a type of language instruction that is a grammatical syllabus focused on specific grammar topics.

Focused Tasks: (Ellis, 2003) described it as type of second language instruction that is designed by the teacher to create opportunities for instruction to focus on a specific grammar topic.

Form Focused Instruction (FFI): An implicit form of grammar instruction, within the umbrella of communicative language teaching, and associated with *task based instruction*, and may incorporate *focused tasks* (Skehan, 1998).

Independent Work Time: Bereiter et al. (2000) describes it as a 20-40 minute period of instruction within OCR when most of the students are engaged in independent activities, giving the teacher the opportunity to work provide differentiated instruction by working one-on-one or with flexible small groups of students to pre-teach or re-teach OCR lessons.

Information-Gap Task: Ellis (2003) describes it as a type of task based instruction with two participants, one who holds the information and the other who does not. To complete the task this information must be exchanged.

Input Flood: Ellis (2003) describes it as an implicit form of grammar instruction whereby students are exposed to written or oral language that contains a high concentration of a particular linguistic form, thereby encouraging students to become aware of it while still remaining focused on meaning.

Interlanguage: the second language learner's emerging use of the second language that varies from a native speaker's use of the second language.

Interaction Hypothesis: Long (1996) posited that language acquisition that is both expressive and receptive requires more than comprehensible input, it also requires sufficient opportunities for conversational interaction.

Interlocutor: a person engaged in the exchange of information through oral or written language.

Jigsaw Task: Ellis (2003) describes it as a type of two-way *information-gap task* (*task based instruction*). The two participants each hold information needed to complete the task, and an exchange of that information is needed to complete the task.

Minority Language Student: within the United States, one who is learning English as a second language; this term is similar to *English Language Learner* except that it emphasizes that the students primary language is not that of the dominant culture.

Negotiation of Form: the process that two speakers use to call attention to issues of linguistic (grammar) issues rather than a strict focus on meaning. Often there is a contrast between the *interlanguage* of one of the interlocutors and standard usage of the second language.

Open Court Reading: An English language arts textbook program published by McGraw Hill for use in kindergarten through sixth grade classrooms.

Program Improvement: Consistent with federal legislation termed No Child Left Behind, a designation for schools that fail to meet annual federal targets for academic improvement as measured by state-wide standardized tests.

Prompt, Clarification: Lyster (2004) defined it as a conversational technique teachers can use (more explicit than *recasts*) to help the second language learner understand that what s/he said is misunderstood or has linguistic errors.

Prompt, Elicitation: Lyster (2004) defined it as a conversational technique teachers can use (more explicit than *recasts*) to encourage the second language learner to complete the end of the teacher's utterance.

Prompt, Metacognitive: Lyster (2004) defined it as a conversational technique teachers can use (more explicit than *recasts*) to encourage the second language learner to become aware of his/her thinking and/or grammar usage.

Reading Fluency: A measure of speed and accuracy reading aloud within OCR. The student reads an unfamiliar passage for one minute and is the count of correct words read (total words correctly read aloud minus mistakes).

Recast: When a second language learner says something with linguistic errors, the teacher may rephrase (hence recast) it, used as an implicit form of instruction to help the language learner notice differences between his/her interlanguage and standard usage of the second language (Elis, 2003).

Schema: a term for the collective bank of knowledge a person has, emphasizing the interconnectedness of internalized knowledge (Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000).

Semantics: how meaning is encoded within words

Sentence Lifting: A process within OCR whereby a teacher takes a short writing sample of a student and revises it during whole group instruction.

Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE): A pedagogy of second language instruction that uses various techniques to support the learning of concepts and knowledge in a second language (Genzok, 2003).

Task Based Instruction (TBI): A communicative language teaching approach whereby language learners must work together and use the second language to solve an authentic communicative problem (Ellis, 2003)

Task Based writing Instruction (TBwI): A type of *task based instruction* whereby an oral language exchange between the teacher and second language learner is used to rephrase written interlanguage into standard English. The oral language exchange to rewrite the student's rough draft maintains primacy of meaning with an occasional shift in focus to grammar instruction.

Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL): A course of study for language teachers, focused on pedagogy and theory from second language acquisition.

Reading Wars, The: A struggle within education and public policy in the United States (from the 1980s through the present), primarily between proponents of *whole language* on one hand and those advocating explicit instruction of phonics and phonemic awareness on the other (Pearson, 2004).

Topicality: Similar to the concept of cohesion, it is the degree to which supporting sentences within a paragraph are able to develop a given topic sentence.

Unfocused Tasks: Activities within task based instruction that are not purposefully designed by the teacher to elicit a particular linguistic form (Ellis, 2003).

Whole Language: A type of English language pedagogy in which literacy is taught holistically (to varying degrees); specific literacy skill development may be embedded within reading and writing activities rather than through explicit instruction, similar to communicative language approaches but originally intended for native-English speakers.

Zone of Proximal Development: Represents skills and concepts maturing within a learner, which s/he may use to solve problems under conditions of assisted performance; Vygotsky posited that two students may have the same level of independent performance but have very different instructional needs because one may have a larger zone of proximal development. It is an important theoretical rationale for differentiated instruction.

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LIST OF APPENDICES

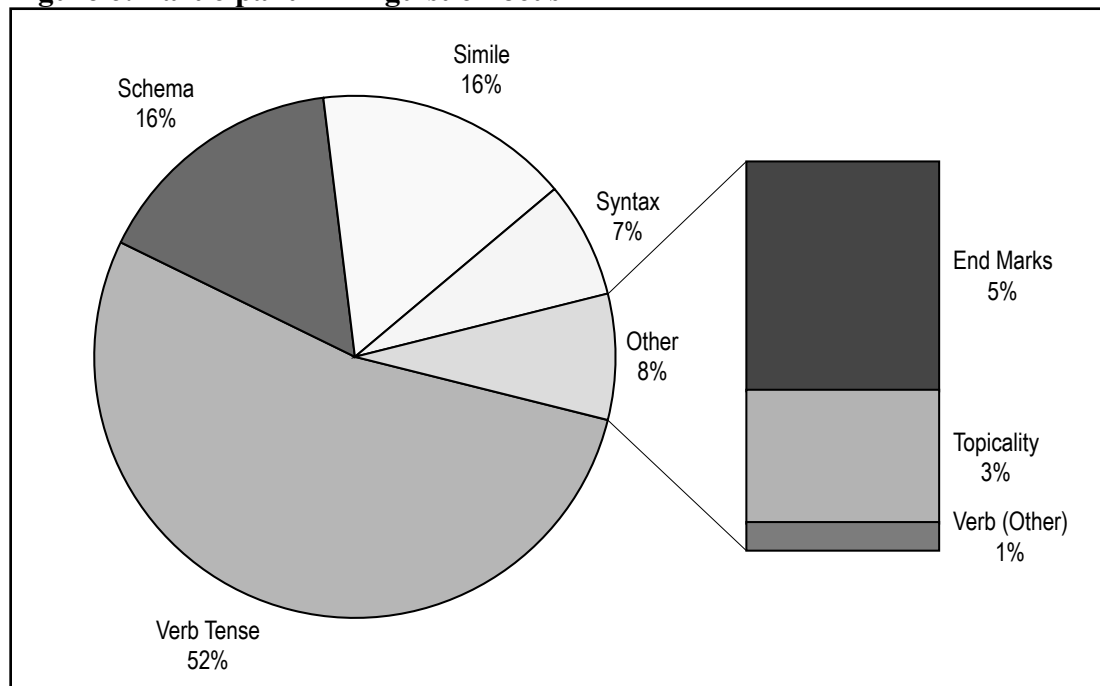
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APPENDIX A: SUBJECT SUMMARY DATA

Participant A

Participant A participated in three writing conferences, during weeks 1, 2, and 4 of the intervention, with a total of 18 sentences and 50 turns. The primary focus of the writing conferences was verb tense usage. Each of the three writing prompts he chose focused on a different verb tense (present, past, and future). There were many issues that I could have pursued within the reactive instruction, but I chose to focus mostly on verb tense usage. He averaged 2.78 turns per recast sentence.

Figure 6: Participant A Linguistic Focus



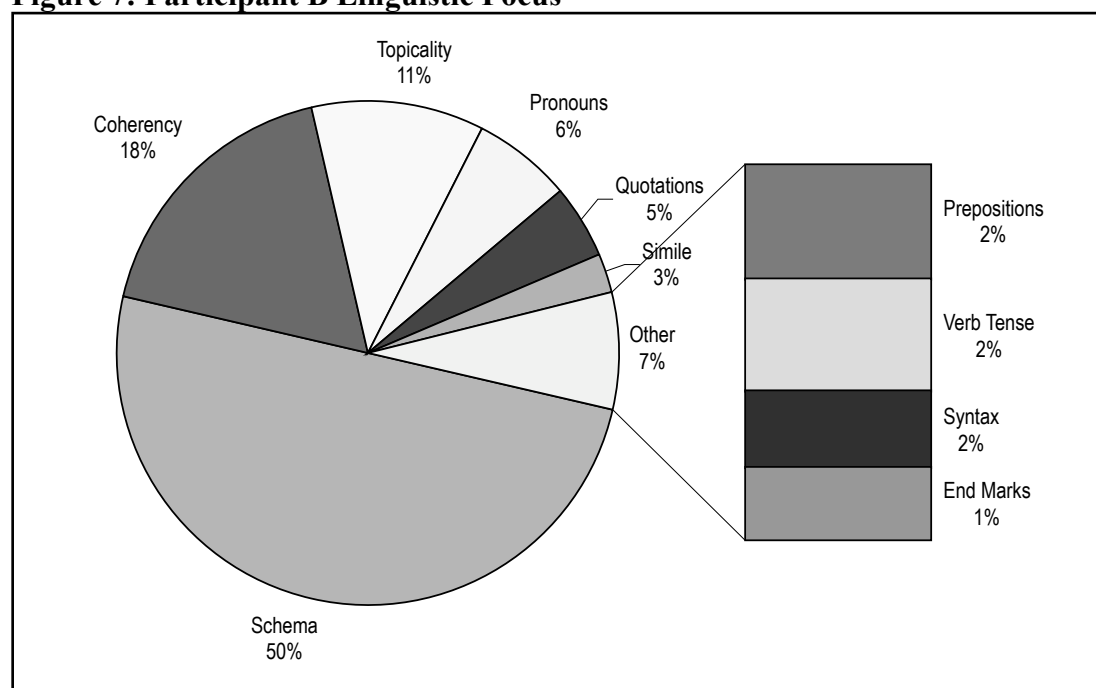
The time spent on the *simile* category represents a single exchange in a single conference, nine turns to recast *It was like brand new* to be *It was like a brand new*

toy. This was extremely challenging for him, but is an excellent example of Vygotsky's concept of assisted performance; under conditions of assisted performance (guided questions), he was able to create a sentence of figurative language, something he could not have done independently.

Participant B

Participant B participated in 7 writing conferences, by far the most prolific writer of the group, with 40 recast sentences over 94 turns. He averaged 2.35 turns per recast sentence.

Figure 7: Participant B Linguistic Focus



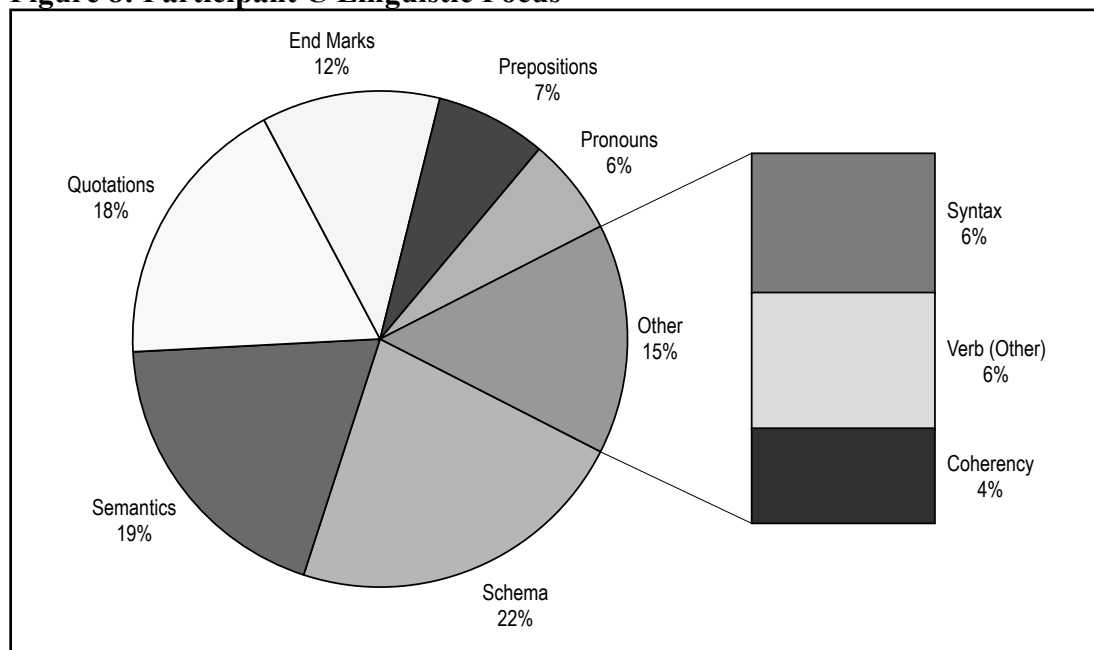
He had very few problems with verb tense or complete sentences. So together we focused on issues of overall structure and meaning rather than specific linguistic features. Problems with schema often took the form of narratives where there was

not sufficient information. For example, in one writing conference he wrote about fixing a problem dealing with a specific game, but without knowledge of the game's rules it made no sense. By adding additional information to clarify this point, the paragraph became meaningful. In another instance, he wrote about using his imagination during play, but spent much of that draft discussing what happened at home later that day after the imaginative play episode was concluded. Teacher interview indicated that "he became better at editing his own work."

Participant C

Participant C had one conference during week 1 and two during week 3. She had 17 sentences recast over 42 turns, with an overall ratio of 2.47 turns per recast sentence.

Figure 8: Participant C Linguistic Focus



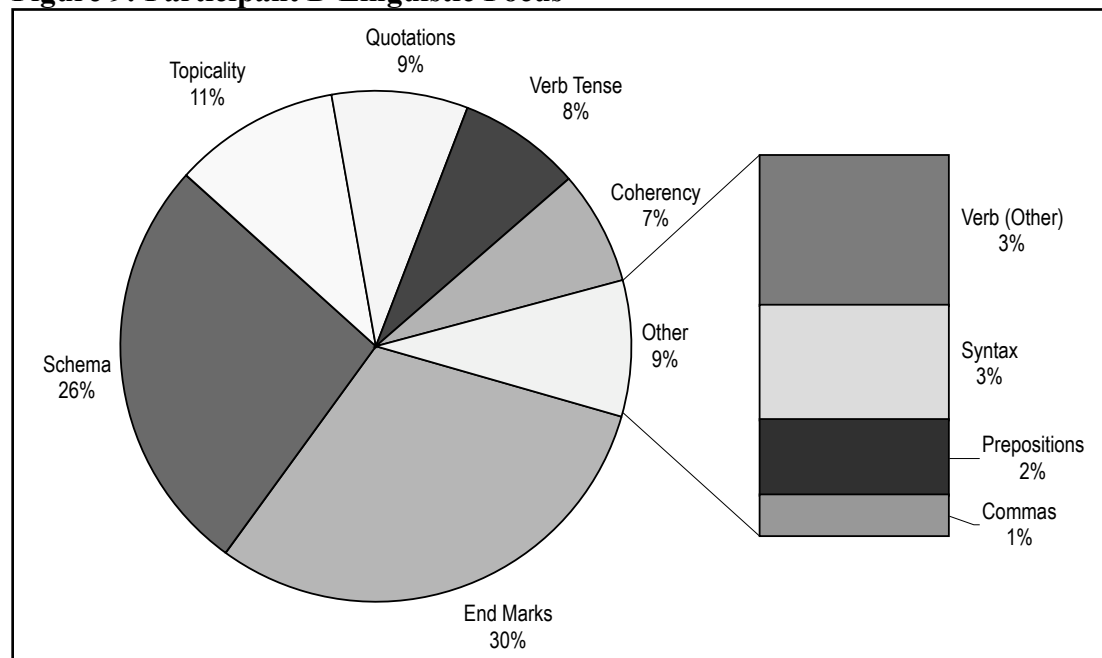
As is reflected above, she had very balanced needs, requiring support in multiple areas to encode her thoughts into written standard English.

In one very important conference, she wrote about how she had helped her mother once. From her writing I could not understand what kind of support she had given (nor would other readers have understood with a shared schema). Only through a series of guided questions was I able to understand that her mother could not read the note the postman had handed her. It was a very powerful moment for both of us. Teacher interview indicated that “she used to write with lots of run-on sentences, and sometimes her sentences would make no sense, or she wasn’t producing what she was trying to communicate.”

Participant D

Participant D had five conferences. He had 26 sentences recast over 94 turns,

Figure 9: Participant D Linguistic Focus



with an overall ratio of 3.62 turns per recast sentence. He had very little problem with verb tense usage, which was the initial focus of the investigation. He had fairly good writing fluency, filling between 1 and 1-1/2 pages for each draft he completed. The area of greatest need was the use of end marks and learning the concept of what exactly is a complete sentence. He was a very quiet student during the interactions, often giving one-word responses to my queries during TBwI, thus I found myself adjusting to use more closed ended questions because he would be silent with open ended ones.

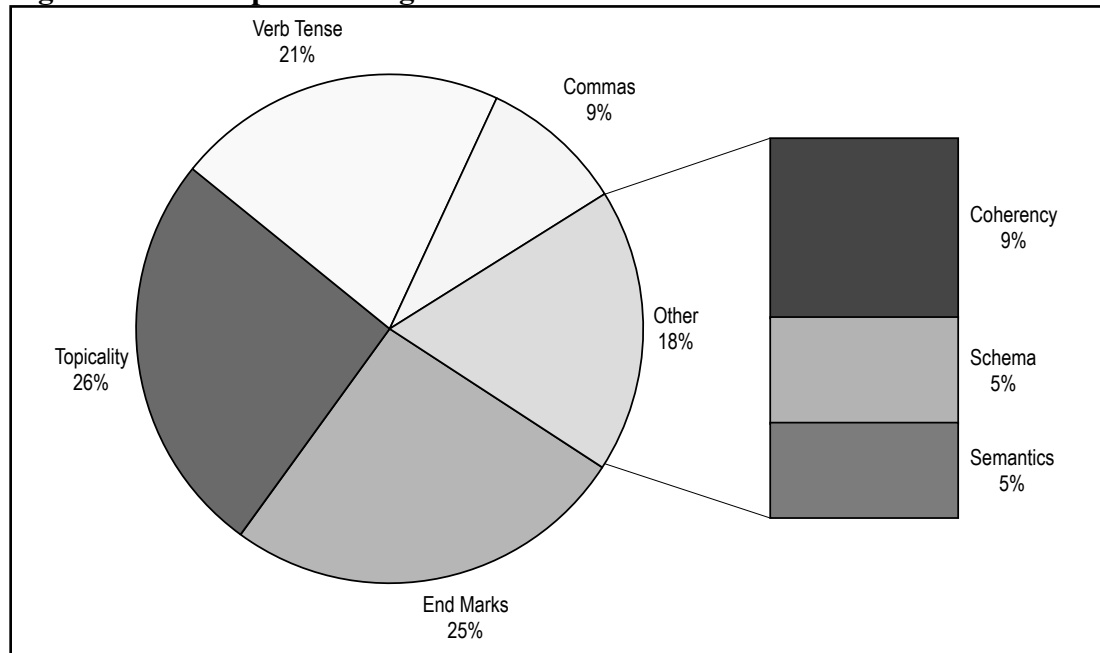
He demonstrated growth over time as evidenced by his last rough draft, which showed correct use of end marks and the punctuation rules for quotes (comma & quote marks). Teacher interview indicated that he “narrowed down that thinking time and actually produced. He would be able to pair/share with somebody else and ... then get right to it.”

Participant E

Participant E only participated in three writing conferences, with 12 sentences recast over 36 turns, averaging three turns per recast sentence.

The data on the distribution focus reflects that each writing conference focused on a very specific area of need. For example, the second writing conference dealt with the use of *imagination*, something he didn't understand well.

The amount of time spent on Topicality reflected that he was writing about something he really didn't understand. The quantity of time spent on Schema implied that it was not an important aspect, although it really was. He wrote one whole paper

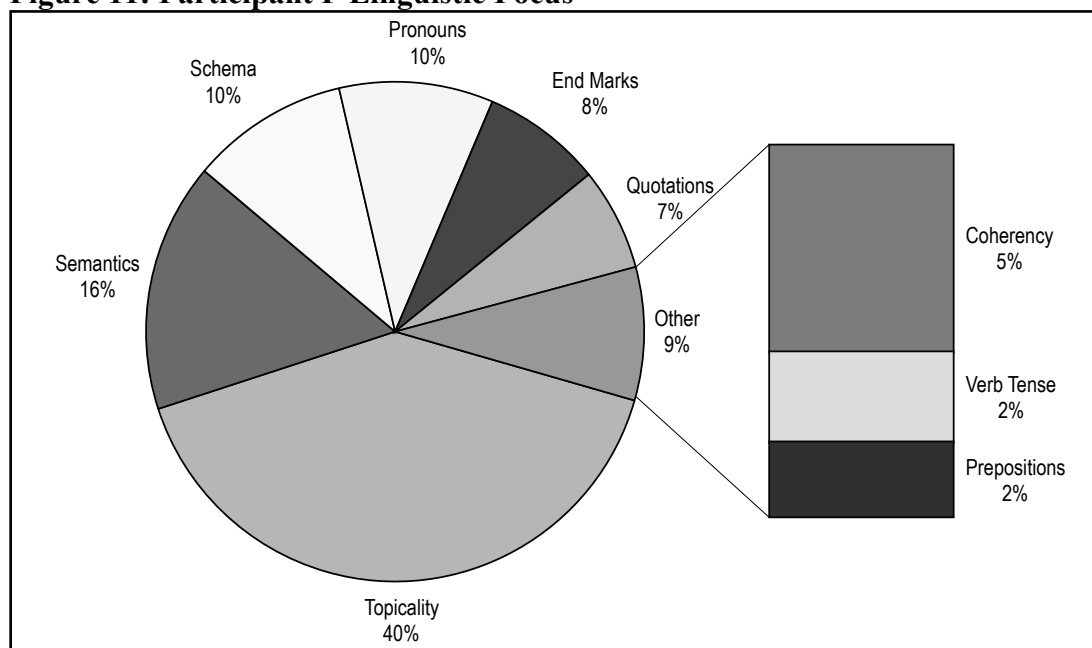
Figure 10: Participant E Linguistic Focus

about finding something valuable once, but through his draft he never actually said what it was (a gold ring).

Participant F

Participant F only participated in two conferences during the last week of the study, with 17 sentences recast over 46 turns, averaging 2.17 turns per recast sentence.

The greatest area of difficulty for her was Topicality. Similar to *Participant E*, she wrote about imagination, a topic she did not really understand. What is interesting is that through assisted performance she was able to demonstrate understanding of the concept by self-correcting a sentence with faulty grammar during the writing conference (reading *I drew a frog* as *I imagined a frog dancing*).

Figure 11: Participant F Linguistic Focus

The other paragraph dealt with a scary moment and she had included insufficient information for the reader to understand what exactly was scary about that event.

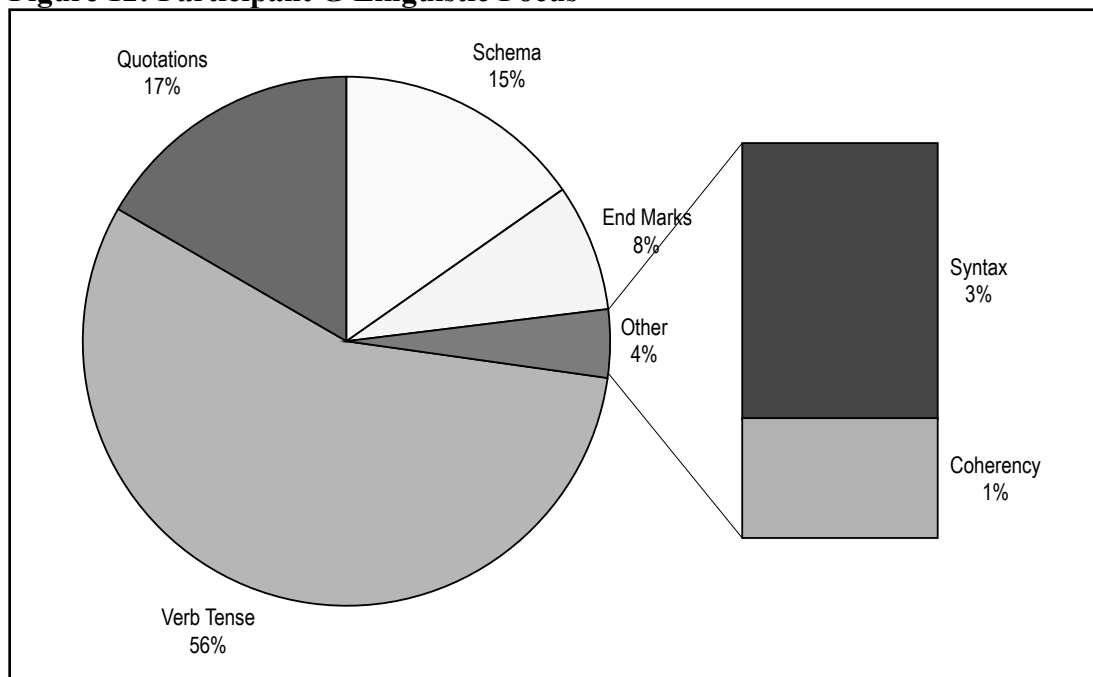
Participant G

Participant G was by far the lowest student in terms of language development and literacy skills. She participated in five writing conferences but only in three cases were they officially included because she was not able to read her own writing (nor was I able to). She had 19 sentences recast over 76 turns, averaging 4 turns per recast sentence.

Once I attempted to have her orally dictate the paragraph to me but I had to abandon that idea because she spoke so slowly. However, after a couple of tries she was determined to create a written piece that would actually contain meaning. She

recruited another participant to help her write it and practiced reading her own work. Thus, was she able to successfully complete three writing conferences. She also had a very low level of language development and even an expression such as *hard times* in the writing prompt was very problematic for her.

Figure 12: Participant G Linguistic Focus



Participant H

Participant H participated in three conferences, one in the first week and two in the last week, having 14 recast sentences over 56 turns, with a ratio of four turns per recast sentence.

Like the other participants, one area of weakness was understanding the difficulties a reader lacking a common schema would have. (e.g., use of pronouns). He wrote one paper that included *we fell down* but never made clear who the *we* was

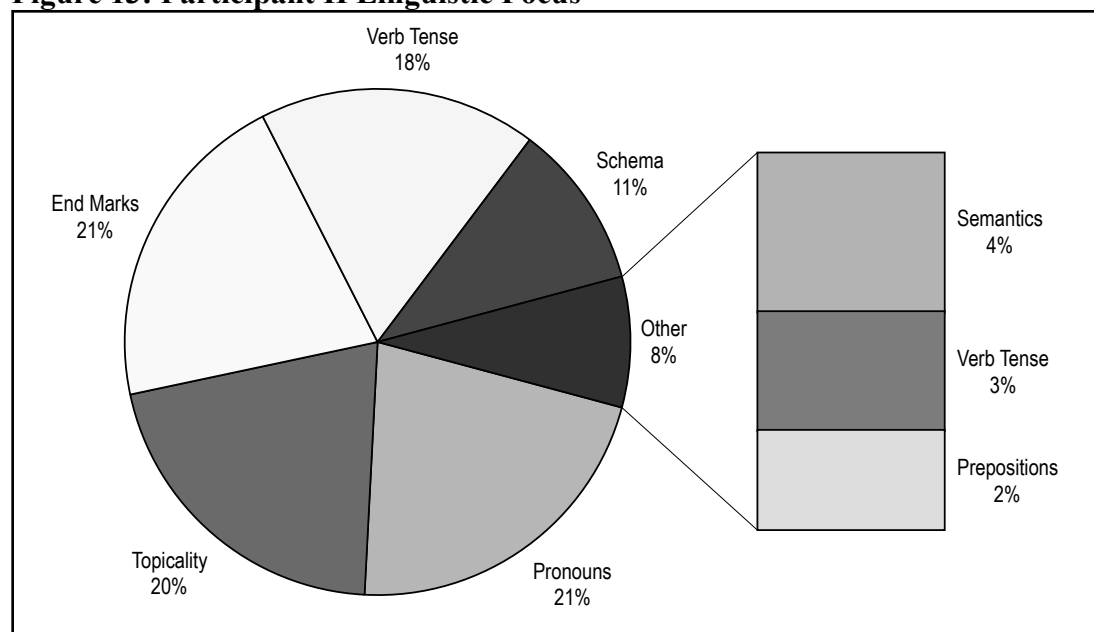
(he also used *we* to express actions which obviously were done by just one person).

He also demonstrated difficulty with certain idiomatic expressions, converting the prompt *sometimes you could find something by accident* to mean something bad.

Thus we ended up changing the prompt to adjust to the topic he actually wrote about:

sometimes you could break something by accident.

Figure 13: Participant H Linguistic Focus



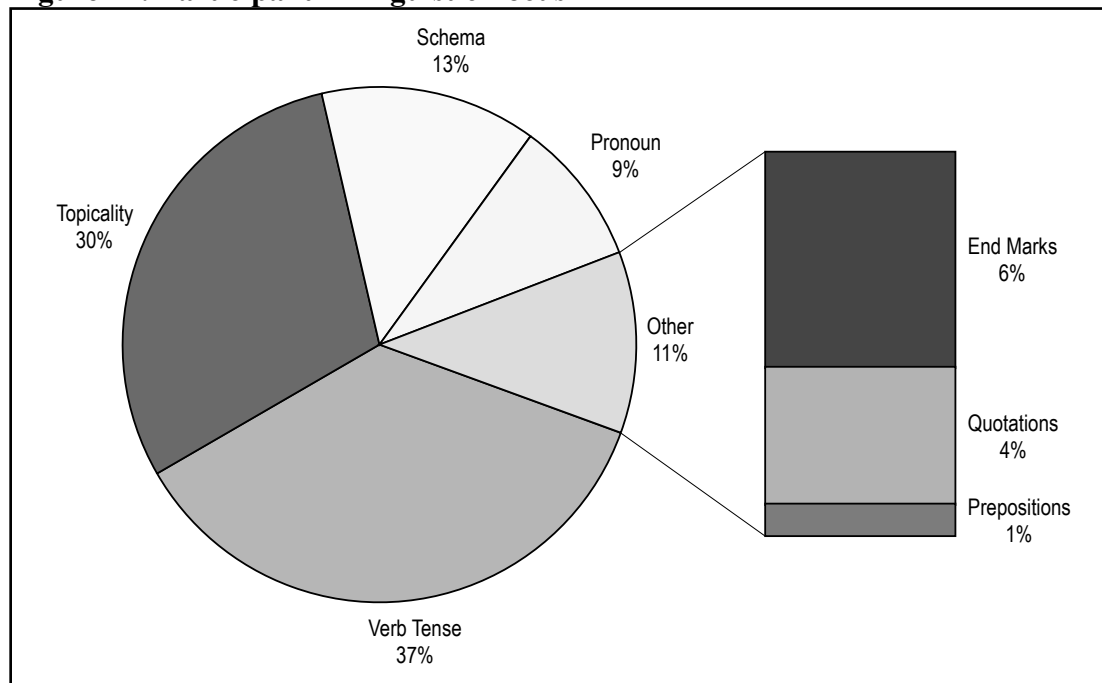
Participant I

Participant I participated in four conferences, with 29 sentences recast over 149 turns, averaging 5.13 turns per recast sentence.

She had the greatest difficulty as a meaningful participant in the task. She had very high writing fluency but was resistant to implicit forms of instruction. For example, when given a prompt to write about a future event (*when I grow up, I will teach my kids to listen and pay attention*), she wrote it in the past tense because she

was actually writing about a dream she had about what would happen when she would grow up someday.

Figure 14: Participant I Linguistic Focus



APPENDIX B: WRITING PROMPTS

Page 1 of 1

IWT WRITING Tuesday, January 16, 2007

Prompt 1:

“So some days became treasure-hunting days, with everybody trying to find that special kind. And then on other days you might just find one without even looking.”
(Roxaboxen, p. 260)

I remember a time I found something special.

[add 4 detail sentences]

OR

Sometimes you can find something special by accident.

[add 4 detail sentences]

OR

When I get older, I want to go treasure-hunting.

[add 4 detail sentences]

Prompt 2:

“All you needed for a horse was a stick and some kind of bridle, and you could gallop anywhere.” (Roxaboxen, p. 262)

I remember a time I used my imagination to play.

[add 4 detail sentences + 1 concluding sentence]

OR

If you use your imagination, you can play without a lot of stuff.

[add 4 detail sentences + 1 concluding sentence]

OR

When I grow up, I will teach my kids to use their imagination.

[add 4 detail sentences + 1 concluding sentence]

IWT WRITING
Monday, January 29, 2007

Prompt 1:

“But when Jacob was eleven and Wilhelm was ten, their father died. Being the oldest, the two boys helped hold the family together during this difficult time for their mother.”
 (A Tale of Brothers Grimm, p. 24)

I remember a time I helped my family.

[add 4 detail sentences]

OR

It is important to help your parents in hard times.

[add 4 detail sentences]

OR

When I grow up, I will teach my kids help me.

[add 4 detail sentences]

Prompt 2:

“One day they were lucky enough to meet what they called a ‘genuine storyteller.’ ... She was a widow who sold eggs and butter in the small village where she lived with her children and grandchildren.” (A Tale of Brothers Grimm, p. 31)

I remember a time I was really lucky.

[add 4 detail sentences + 1 concluding sentence]

OR

With hard work and good luck, you can do anything.

[add 4 detail sentences + 1 concluding sentence]

OR

When I grow up, I will work hard and maybe be lucky too.

[add 4 detail sentences + 1 concluding sentence]

APPENDIX C: SAMPLE WRITING CONFERENCE

Page 1 of 1

January 19, 2007

I remember a time I tried something new and different. I was eight years old. My dad and I went to the building. I was tired. My dad said, "There's different stuff in the building. You will have fun with new friends." But I wanted to keep my old friends instead of making new ones.

I remember a time I tried something new and different.

I was eight years old.

Me and my dad went to the building.

My dad said there's different stuff in the building.

You will have fun with new friends.

But I like my old friends.

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A	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	M	N	O	P	R
1	Num	Row	ID	T	S	Recast	Teacher	Student	LenT	LenS	RatioTS	P	Target
	c06	101	I	T1	S1	I remember a time I tried something new and different.	okay, why don't you read me the first sentence.	okay, I'm ready ... I remember a time I tried something new and different.	47	74	0.64	Rea	n/a
737							okay, wait wait ... 'Something new and different' ... So what I'm going to do is ... you're going to read me each sentence ... we're going to stop and I'm going to see if I have any questions or if I have trouble understanding ... and then we'll move on to the next one	-	269	1	269	Sia	n/a
738	c06	102	I	T2									
739	c06	103	I	T3	S2	I was eight years old.	okay, so what is the next sentence?	I was eight years old ... Me and my dad	35	39	0.9	Rea	n/a
740	c06	104	I	T4			Okay, 'I was eight years old' ... that's really like one sentence, right? ... okay, so let's call that a sentence	-	113	1	113	Sia	M.End
741	c06	106	I	T6			Okay so that's the next sentence, right?	yes	40	3	13.33	Rea	n/a
742	c06	109	I	T9			very good, so I ... so we can change this to be 'My dad and I went to the building'	-	83	1	83	Sia	Pronoun
743	c06	110	I	T10	S4	I was tired.	okay, so what was the next one?	I was tired ...	31	15	2.07	Rea	n/a
744	c06	112	I	T12			okay, so when you are going through here, one of the things you are going to check is I want you to notice where I am putting the periods, and you are going to put them the same way	-	181	1	181	Sia	M.End
745	c06	113	I	T13	S5	My dad said there's different stuff in the building.	okay so what is the next one?	My dad said there is different stuff in the building ... you will have fun with your friends.	29	93	0.31	Rea	n/a
746	c06	116	I	T16			marks ... okay, 'My dad said There's ... okay so comma, quotation marks, capital T, there's different stuff in the building	-	124	1	124	Sia	M.Quote
747	c06	117	I	T17	S6	You will have fun with new friends.	okay, then what is the next sentence?	You will have fun with your friends but I like my old friends ...	37	65	0.57	Rea	n/a
748	c06	119	I	T19			Okay, so we are going to put the quotation marks, so the quotation marks are going to end there.	-	96	1	96	Sia	M.Quote
749	c06	120	I	T20	S7	But I like my old friends.	and then, what is the last sentence?	but I like my old friends.	36	26	1.38	Rea	n/a

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	A	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	M	N	O	P	R
1	Num	Row	ID	T	S	Sentence	Recast	Teacher	Student	LenT	LenS	RatioTS	P	Target
787	c06	105	I	T5	S3	Me and my dad went to the building.	My dad and I went to the building.	okay, what does the next sentence say?	"Me and my dad went to the building" ... it was	38	47	0.81	Met	Pronoun
	c06	107	I	T7				So "Me and my dad went to the building" ... just one thing, I notice here ... We go to school, does that sound right? ... We go to school." it should be ...	no	139	2	69.5	Met	Pronoun
788	c06	108	I	T8				and that is one sentence, right? ... now, how many periods do we see here? ... one, two ... is this two sentences?	I went to school	53	16	3.31	EI	Pronoun
790	c06	111	I	T11				Okay, wait ... "In the building..." okay, one question here ... are we actually using Dad's real words, ... are we using Dad's exact words? ... Quo	no	114	2	57	Met	M.End
791	c06	114	I	T14				Okay, so then we want to put our ... Quo	yeah	138	4	34.5	Cla	M.Quote
792	c06	115	I	T15				so, let's stick with this for right now, "You will have fun with new friends" ... now, is this still your dad talking?	lation	40	6	6.67	EI	M.Quote
793	c06	118	I	T18				but I like my old friends too?	yes	118	3	39.33	Cla	M.Quote
794	c06	121	I	T21				I don't understand, are you saying that you want to keep your old friends? or you want to make new friends but you also want to keep your old friends? ... I don't understand.	yes	30	3	10	Rep	Schema
795	c06	122	I	T22				It's because, I don't like to be somebody's friends ... I only like my old friends.	no	175	83	2.11	Cla	Schema
796	c06	123	I	T23				So you didn't want to have new friends, you just wanted to keep your old friends, right? ... Okay, so let's say that because I say "I like my old friends" it doesn't really tell me what you want, right?	no	204	2	102	Met	Schema
797	c06	124	I	T24				Okay, so let's change "but I want, but I wanted" ... what?	I wanted my new friends	57	23	2.48	Cla	Schema

	A	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	M	N	O	P	R
1	Num	Row	ID	T	S	Sentence	Recast	Teacher	Student	Lent	Lens	Ratio	S	Target
	c06	125	I	T25				You wanted your new friends? or you wanted to keep your old friends.... I wanted to keep my OLD friends. . . and you wanted to keep your old friends and make new ones, or you wanted old friends INSTEAD of new ones?	When I was watching the stairs, I sort of think about something ... My dad opened the door. . and we went to the room 27 . . it was like, third grade, and he let me stay there for a week, then my dad went to his work.	214	215		1	Cla Schema
798								Okay, so did you want to keep ... So you didn't really want to make new friends, right?	no	87	2	43.5	Cla Schema	
799	c06	126	I	T26				Okay, so we are going to say, "I wanted to keep my old friends INSTEAD of making new ones ... Okay?	yes	99	3	33	Cla Schema	
800														

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APPENDIX D: RECRUITMENT TOOLS

Page 1 of 1

University of Southern California
Rossier School of Education
Waite Phillips Hall, 1001D
Los Angeles, CA 90089-4031

Volunteers Needed for a Writing Study **Hace falta voluntarios para una investigación sobre escritura**

Hello, my name is Alex Bantis. I'm a teacher here at xxxxx School. I am also a student. I go to school at USC. I'm getting a masters degree about teaching English. Just like your kids have to do research projects, I have to also. I want to do a research project about learning English and learning to do writing.

I am going to do a research project after school for about a month. It will be for 8-10 kids, from 3:00 until 3:45 in my classroom (room 9). I will give the kids snacks, and as a thank you for participating in the study they will receive a fountain pen and bottle of ink (about \$35). I am looking for third graders who are learning English as their second language.

I can't promise that your child will improve their writing, and remember that it won't change what kind of grade your teacher will give your child. Also, they can quit at any time. If you have any questions, you can contact me directly at (xxx)xxx-xxxx.

Hola, mi nombre es Alex Bantis. Soy un maestro aquí en la escuela xxxxx. También soy estudiante en USC. Estoy estudiando para una maestría sobre enseñanza de inglés. Como sus hijos deben hacer proyectos y tareas, yo también. Quiero hacer una investigación sobre aprendiendo inglés, especialmente en escritura.

Voy a hacer una investigación despues del día escolar para un mes. Habrá lugar para 8-10 estudiantes, desde las 3:00 p.m. hasta 3:45 p.m. en mi aula (salon 9). Los estudiantes van a recibir un poco de comida para picar. Para dar gracias por ayudarme en mi investigación, su hijo recibirá una pluma fuente y fuente de tinta (valen como \$35). Busco estudiantes del tercer grado que aprenden inglés como idioma segundo.

No puedo prometerle a usted que su hijo mejorará su inglés o escritura, y tambien ten en cuenta que su participación no afectará sus notas en la clase regular. También, pueden dejar de participar en este investigación cuando lo quieran. Cuando tenga usted cuestioness, podria llamarme a (xxx)xxx-xxxx

☐ Yes, I am interested in learning more.
Sí, me gusta aprender más.

☐ No, I am not interested.
No, no lo quiero.

Date/Fecha:

Student
Estudiante

Parent/Guardian
Padre/Guardián

University of Southern California
 Rossier School of Education
 Waite Phillips Hall, 1001D
 Los Angeles, CA 90089-4031

ASSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH

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ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

**An Action Research, Using Task-Based Instruction and Focus on Form
 in Open Court Independent Work Time for Written Language**

1. My name is Alexandros Bantis.
2. We are asking you to take part in a research study because we are trying to learn more about different ways to teach writing for elementary English language learners
3. If you agree to be in this study, you will come to Room for about 30-40 minutes after school, until about 3:45 p.m. (2:45 p.m. when school gets out early on Tuesdays). We will work on writing for about a month (about 20 times). You will be writing paragraphs about the Open Court stories. At least once per week you will meet with me one-on-one to do a writing conference to make your writing easier to understand. We will make a final draft in the writing conference, and then you will need to make corrections to the first draft by checking the final draft we will make together. Most of the time you will be working independently. I would like to make an audio recording of what we talk about so that I can understand how to make the writing conference better, but if you don't want me to tape it that's okay.
4. If you don't feel comfortable writing or talking about your writing, then you might feel uncomfortable being a part of this study because we are going to do a lot of writing and talking about writing. Also, when we do the writing conference, there will be other kids in the room who are working independently, so maybe you could feel a little embarrassed if they hear us talking about your writing. But you don't have to talk if you don't want to
5. I don't know if your writing or English will get better. It isn't going to change the grade your teacher will give you, and won't change whether you go to the next grade. You will get a

Date of Preparation: *[insert date]*

USC UPIRB #

Expiration Date:

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granola bar at the beginning of each meeting so you can have more energy. And I will give you a plastic fountain pen and bottle of ink (worth about \$35) when you are done as a way of saying, "Thank you" for your hard work.

6. Please talk this over with your parents before you decide whether or not to participate. We will also ask your parents to give their permission for you to take part in this study. But even if your parents say "yes" you can still decide not to do this.
7. If you don't want to be in this study, you don't have to participate. Remember, being in this study is up to you and no one will be upset if you don't want to participate or even if you change your mind later and want to stop.
8. You can ask any questions that you have about the study. If you have a question later that you didn't think of now, you can call me (323)394-0399 or ask me next time.
9. Signing your name at the bottom means that you agree to be in this study. You and your parents will be given a copy of this form after you have signed it.

☐ It is **OKAY** to make tape recordings of the writing conferences.

☐ It is **NOT OKAY** to make tape recordings of the writing conferences.

Name of Subject

Date

Subject's Signature

Name of Investigator

Date

Name of Investigator

Date of Preparation: *[insert date]*

USC UPIRB #:

Expiration Date:

APPENDIX E: DEVELOPMENT OF CRITERIA FOR DATA CODING

Regarding the prompt linguistic focus, arriving at a set of criteria and categories was problematic and difficult. The exact categorization evolved over the course of the analysis. The initial categories of prompt focus consisted of punctuation, verb tense, other grammar, coherency, and cohesion. Coherency was defined as the degree of understandability while cohesion was defined as the degree to which the sentences were consistent with the given topic sentences.

Very quickly, this categorization scheme for the prompt focus proved to be inadequate. During this second stage of coding of the prompt focus, there came to be the following categories: coherence, cohesion, contraction, end-mark, expansion, meaning, miscellaneous, prepositions, pronouns, quote marks, complete sentence, syntax, tense, and verb. Contraction was defined as prompts that ultimately ended with some sentence or portion of sentences being deleted, while *expansion* was defined as adding additional information to sentences or adding additional sentences. This system proved to be cumbersome and did not yield meaningful information.

The final evolution of the coding system entailed looking at the data set from the initial perspective, which was looking at barriers of the interlanguage to a fluid and effortless transmission of meaning from the author to the reader. Celce-Murcia & Olshtain (2000) discussed revising a writing piece from the perspective of Grice's (1975) maxims of quantity, quality, relevance, and manner. Issues of manner were classified according the major grammatical categories of: punctuation (primarily quotation marks and end marks), verb tense (one of the original targeted features),

other verb issues (primarily issues of using past continuous versus simple past, for example), prepositions (both the use of prepositions and idiomatic usage within phrasal verbs), syntax (this was in some cases a matter of word order or in some cases it was that a critical element of the sentence was missing), and pronouns (in some cases there was confusion due to an unclear antecedent and in other cases confusion due to mixing objective/nominative cases of pronouns). A small number of the turns were also classed as similes and semantics.

The framework of Grice's maxims meant understanding the underlying purpose of recasting the participant's sentences with either more or less information. The underlying issue was lack of a shared schema. Often times the participant attempted to share some event but assumed that the reader had sufficient background information to know what was going on, as the excerpt below indicates (ns=native speaker, nns=non-native speaker):

Prompt: I remember a time I thought up a way to fix a problem.

Draft: n/a

Recast: Then I said, "You can only choose one element to play.

NS: okay, my question is ... I don't understand, what was the problem?

NNS: that he choose three things.

NS: he choose three things ... okay so the problem was ... what was the problem?

NNS: he choose three things.

NS: so the problem was that he chose three things, but he should have chosen ...

NNS: one

NS: AH!, okay, so can we say that then? ... because I didn't really understand the problem.

NNS: then I said, *you can only choose two* ... ONE element."

NS: one element, you can only choose one element ...

NNS: to play.

NS: to play ... and that fixed the problem?

--Conference 09 / Turns 23-28

In some cases there was extraneous information added to the paragraph that did not contribute to understanding the meaning, and the sentence (or portion of a sentence) needed to be taken out in order to create sentences that remained focused on providing support to the topic sentence. These were classified as Topicality

Prompt: I remember a time I used my imagination to play

NS: okay, so one question ... *I was fighting evil people. I was throwing water balls at them.* ... so that is the part where you used your imagination to play, right? ... and then this part right here *Then it got so late that I had to go inside my house.* Is that talking about using your imagination to play?

NNS: no

NS: *Then I smelled food cooking. It was egg with beans and soup.* does that have to do with your imagination and playing?

NNS: no

NS: okay, *Next it was time to go to sleep.* Does that have to do with your imagination and play?

--Conference 29 / Turns 12-14

In some cases there was a fundamental lack of understanding of the prompt and, thus, rather shallow topic development. These cases proved difficult to code. Should these cases be categorized as semantics (lack of understanding of the meaning of the topic sentence), schema (in this case a mismatch between the schema of the teacher who created the topic sentence and the student who was writing the detail sentences), or should it be coherency (that the student-created detail sentences did not sufficiently develop the teacher-created topic sentence)? In the example below, the participant did not understand the concept of *imagination* and wrote a paragraph that was essentially devoid of meaning. Hence, it assumed the qualities of a grammar exercise rather than a genuine communicative task.

Prompt: I will show my friends how to yose There imagination.
 1draft: And I will show them.
 2draft: I will show my friends how to yose There imagination.
 3draft: I will show my wife how to use her imagination to.
 4draft: I will hsow my hole family to.
 --Conference 01 / Turns 5-6

Once the categorization scheme was in place, the last piece needed was to quantify the amount of time spent within the conferences focusing on the different targets. To do this, I decided to assign a value according to the length of the text string generated from the turn. For example, the following comes from the 11th turn of the first writing conference. It was a successful recast, and the purpose was *verb tense* (using the simple future tense). The length of the text of this turn was 27 characters for the by me and 30 characters by the participant.

NS: I ... will, say *I will go*
 NNS: I will go treasure hunting ...

By assuming that the length of the text strings within the transcription reflected the actual amount of time spent talking during the conference, it was possible to quantify the proportion of time spent on the various topics.